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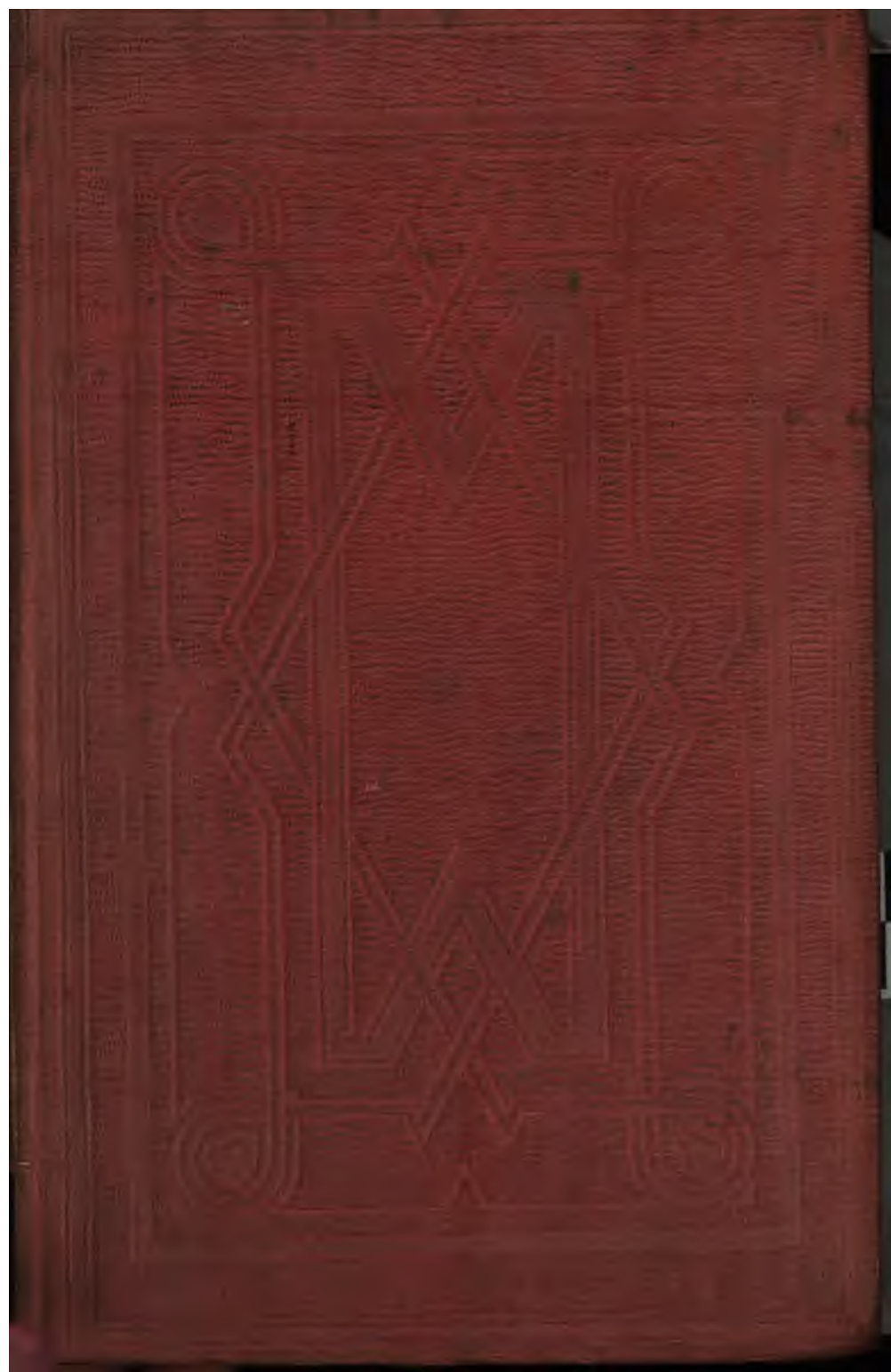
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Harriette Browne's

School-Days.

HARRIETTE BROWNE's

SCHOOL-DAYS.

A TALE.



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HARRIETTE BROWNE'S SCHOOL DAYS.

CHAPTER I.

In the front drawing-room of a large house in a respectable square in the west end of our metropolis, sat Mrs. Durett. She was a stiff and rather awful looking being, with figure ungracefully erect, and had just entered on that period of life when single ladies are frequently observed to avoid all subjects which border on chronology, or bear even a remote tendency to specified *anno Domini*. One perpendicular groove or rut divided her forehead,—deepening as it descended on the nose, and which was apparently caused by the small twinkling gray eyes having got up a sort of understanding between them which gradually drew them nearer to each other. The expression of these orbs was somewhat piercing and vulture-like, and seemed to penetrate the beholder with an undefined and indescribable feeling of apprehension. Her dress consisted of a dark coloured silk of stout texture, with full hanging sleeves; and in accordance with the fashion of that period, a lace cap of large dimensions decked her head, from which sprouted high “giraffe bows” of bright canary coloured ribbon.

If we may be allowed to borrow a simile suggested by scholastic recollections, we would say that she resembled in figure a birch *restant*, that is when independent of head and arms, for her long body and waist were strapped in hard, tight, and compact, representing the handle of the birch, while the skirt diverged in a gentle slope to the ground.

The room which Mrs. Durett was now occupying was very handsomely furnished, and for extrinsic decoration, the chimney-piece, chiffonieres, and tables were loaded with a superfluity of old and new china, foreign shells, and books; and in every direction the eye was attracted and even oppressed by the redundance of what is called "fancy-work," specimens of tent-stitch, cross-stitch, Swiss embroidery, squabs, ottomans, sofa cushions, chair covers, pole and hand screens of various kinds, bags, mats, and portfolios, all which were indicative of the "genius and gratitude of the fairy hands that had made them."

Through the folding doors which led into the back drawing-room were visible a grand horizontal piano-forte and a handsome harp of Erard's, both looking as if they had recently been in use, for the music books still remained on the desks, and the stools were yet standing by the instruments. Two large globes, a terrestrial and a celestial, were also advanced into notice in the centre of the room, and on the table near them lay a quadrant, compasses, and charts.

In both apartments the walls were hung with a profusion of unartistic drawings—in crayon, pencil, and water colours, representing churches, pastoral scenes, and bouquets of flowers of exaggerated size and form. Also groups of persons were delineated whose legs and arms seemed not to belong to themselves, but which, proceeding from some unaccountable part of the drapery with which, they were clothed, might have appertained to any of their neighbours; and showed that lady artists must learn something of anatomy and proportion, if they intend or wish their drawings to resemble nature.

The variety and multiplicity of the articles assembled in these rooms showed to any experienced eye that this chamber could be a locality of no less importance than the receiving-room of some fashionable emporium of elegance and accomplishment for young ladies, and so it was; and the lady now seated in awful dignity among this incongruous assemblage of works of art, surrounded as she was by all the "pomp and circumstance" of wealth and authority, was no less an individual than the fair proprietress of the far famed seminary of Forester House.

There was an air of more than usual importance in

the manner and looks of Mrs. Durett on this occasion, and a piece of rich embroidery on which she was employed was often laid aside; and rising every now and then from the chaise longue on which she was seated, she walked a few paces for the purpose of consulting the time-piece, and to watch the slow progress of its hands (which are never known to hasten their speed in compliance with our impatience), she would listen for awhile and then returning to her seat resume her occupation.

At length, starting eagerly from her chair, she exclaimed with a loud voice and with a certain sharpness and asperity of tone, and with no response to her monologue but the time-piece which continued its clear and measured tick-tick, tick-tick—

“I wish the people that come to me were more punctual to their engagements. How few of them understand true politeness, to keep me waiting here as they constantly do expecting me to dance attendance on their idle ways! It is now full ten minutes past the hour she appointed to be here, and I suppose she will delay this visit, so that I shall be prevented from taking my drive in the Park this afternoon. The airs these people give themselves cause me so much unnecessary trouble. The children are not half the plague to me that their parents and friends are—I have no patience with their rudeness to those who undertake the instruction of their tiresome offspring! They might, I think, feel some little gratitude to those who relieve them of a burden which their own ignorance, idleness, or selfishness, makes them cast upon us!”

It was true that in the case of Mrs. Durett, the parents of her pupils did interfere with her comfort and ease, more than the young ladies themselves; for she had long arrived at the conclusion that it was perfectly unnecessary for a person of her fortune and pretensions to trouble herself about the business of the school-rooms. Every arrangement of her household was conducted with the greatest order, regularity, and liberality. She had procured a first-rate housekeeper, who held undivided sway over the commissariat department, and ruled the servants, and who was responsible to her mistress that they did their duty. She also had engaged what are termed good teachers, who kept good order, and compelled the young ladies to imbibe a certain quantum of

grammar and history, and to be accomplished even to their fingers' ends.

Having procured these aids, Mrs. Durett complacently satisfied herself that all would go right; she believed that each did her duty, and therefore led rather an easy life of it herself, being only a referee in cases of difficulty, or when required to ward off any danger which seemed to threaten the interests or celebrity of her establishment.

Once every day Mrs. Durett visited the school-room, when, in the course of the studies, she walked with an air of deliberation and dignity through the rooms devoted to learning; and usually read the family prayers at nine o'clock before retiring for the night. She also held a general examination once in the month to ascertain precisely the young ladies' progress, and for the purpose of assuring herself that the teachers did not neglect their duty. This was the extent of all the care and responsibility with which the mistress of Forester House burdened herself; with the exception, indeed, of the necessary attention to all visitors, who either brought a new pupil or came to look after the dear ones they had entrusted to her care.

Mrs. Durett had scarcely concluded the delivery of the foregoing effusion when a doubled, trebled assault on the knocker of the front door resounded long and loudly through the house—and with such a noisy application for admission as certainly announced the arrival of some one of high pretension. The drawing-room door was shortly after thrown wide open, and a tall footman, all powder and tags, uttered the names of "Mrs. and Miss Browne." A gentle, quiet-looking little lady following this announcement, entered the room accompanied by a young girl of about fourteen years of age; both were dressed in deep mourning, and the elder lady wore the sad insignia of a widow's grief.

After the usual exchange of courtesies—which being icy on the part of the governess, fell as it were like snowflakes on the hearts of the two mourners—a little conversation was entered into respecting the mother's wishes on some trifling subjects with regard to her child's comfort, for all other arrangements had previously been settled, and nothing remained but to place the new pupil under the charge of Mrs. Durett, and then leave her to her fate.

One sad quarter of an hour was passed in trying to

converse freely, but the poor widow's heart, at the thought of losing her little Harriette, who had never before quitted her, and who had been the hourly comfort of her now desolate life, was so much depressed at leaving her in this strange home, that she felt it impossible to enter on any indifferent subjects of discussion.

With regard to the feelings of the new pupil herself, we may venture to assert that while thus in the presence-chamber of her newly-elected governess they very much resembled those of a patient having to await in the operating room the entry of the dentist; for a creeping sensation of chill and dread possessed her nervous frame, creating an awful apprehension of some unknown and untried suffering. It is not that we would intentionally cast any imputation on governesses of schools generally, or of Mrs. Durett in particular, but every poor child quitting, for the first time in its life, the love, the comforts, and the protection of the parental wing, experiences a grief more poignant perhaps than any subsequent sorrow can be, because it is the first; and attaches perhaps to the scholastic coldness and precision of manner, a degree of severity which is not intended or felt, also attributing all the blame of her new sorrow, not as it is really, to the fact that she has left her home and her freedom for awhile, but to the governess—who “drest in a little brief authority” is feared and suspected as being her worst enemy.

When Mrs. Browne rose to depart she addressed Mrs. Durett in words very similar to those used by all the parents who had previously placed their daughters at her school, to the effect that she “believed her child to be without fault, very clever, and requiring only kindness to lead her on the flowery paths of virtue, literature, and accomplishment,” and concluded thus—“I am afraid that I should not have the strength of mind to part with my darling Harriette, now my only companion, but from the deep conviction that it will be greatly for her advantage to be for awhile under your care—for ill health and suffering have rendered me quite unequal to the task of instructing her myself. I think that you will find her forward for her age, and I hope to hear that she is tractable and industrious. Her dear papa, who—who is gone from us now...” and the widow's voice sunk almost to a whisper as she uttered the last words—“took great

pains with her studies, but perhaps not in the systematic routine adopted in your establishment."

The anxious mother looked inquiringly at Mrs. Durett, as if for a word of encouragement, but seeing no expression of the kind on the blank, unsympathising countenance of the teacher and trainer of youth, continued—"At least I hope you will not find her very backward, and I think she will be a good girl."

This appeal was answered by a dry cough, which was followed by a choice and well-arranged sentence, and ran thus:—

"I dare say that we shall do very well—of course there must be a great deal to correct and set right, or Miss Browne would not have been placed at Forester House. I have not, however, the slightest doubt, madam, but that your daughter will conduct herself so as to secure the entire approbation of myself and her good mamma, who is now so kindly—nay, I may say liberally—affording her opportunities so advantageous of eventually rendering herself all that her most sanguine and fastidious friends could either wish, hope for, or expect. Indeed," added she, with a forced smile, "we seldom suffer ourselves to be disappointed in a pupil, for we never allow our young ladies to be anything but what we intend them to be—a pleasure to their parents and friends and a credit to ourselves."

Mrs. Durett had for many years past been in the habit of uttering these prolonged effusions, and indeed the phraseology had become so habitual to her that the words fell from her lips with the same measured meaningless monotony of tone with which the showman at a country fair pours forth his oft-repeated task of explanation.

The formal yet impressive manner with which the governess delivered this well-picked sentence, was beginning to produce a very unfavourable effect on the mind of the pupil, in her estimation of her newly-constituted instructress, when fortunately for Mrs. Durett, Harriette's further notes and reflections on her character were interrupted by Mrs. Browne taking her leave.

How Harriette's heart sunk within her when she had taken the last lingering kiss from her dear mother, I will leave to be pictured in the memory of any of those of my readers who have the power of recalling the day and hour when

he first quitted the parents' side and felt himself at school and alone in the chill atmosphere of strangers. There is a deep regret attending this first separation from old ties, old associations, and home comforts; an indefinite presentiment of all the host of annoyances and difficulties to be encountered on this first page of our life's history, which we feel can scarcely be forgotten, and will rise up in clear remembrance as of an evil day, even in the busier and more advanced stages of worldly strife and trial!

The parting was indeed painful to both mother and child, but Harriette was an incipient young heroine whose mind had been formed and strengthened by her pious father's care, and therefore for her mother's sake she now restrained her tears and her feelings until the closing doors had separated them; but no sooner had her mother passed from her sight than Harriette lost all self-control, and turning towards the window burst into a flood of tears, which even the dread presence of Mrs. Durett could not compel her to suppress.

She was, however, soon roused from her grief by the unwelcome sound of the governess's voice, which although by no means intended to be unkind, yet the words grated harshly on Harriette's sensitive ear.

"Come, Miss Browne, we never allow crying here—you ought indeed to be above such childish weakness at your age—we are all very happy at Forester House. Come, dry your eyes, and I will send for your cousin, Miss Falkland, to speak with you. Your mamma seemed too ill for me to suggest her seeing her niece, besides which Eliza was at that time engaged with her Italian master, and I did not wish to propose her being disturbed at such a time, and particularly as Mrs. Browne appeared entirely to have forgotten that she was in the house."

The bell was accordingly rung, the carriage was ordered to be in readiness immediately, and Miss Falkland was to be requested to come to the drawing-room.

Harriette and her cousin had never met, yet still it was a consolation to the young novice to feel that there was one among so many strangers whom she could call "cousin," and with whom, she thought, there must exist a tie of friendship which would secure her both kindness and protection. But how strangely are we often disappointed, even when our hopes seem most rationally founded!

Harriette was a child of nature, and therefore was ill prepared to contend with all the *finesse*, or to be pleased with the affectation which is too often found in a ladies' boarding school ; so that when her cousin entered the drawing-room with the studied curtsy, and on being introduced to Harriette flew affectedly forward to embrace her, she felt a little awkward, and was rather appalled at a manner so totally new to her. Miss Falkland, however, seemed very affectionate, even more so than Harriette had anticipated, and therefore she tried to be pleased and to think it all right. Mrs. Durett addressing her pet, Miss Falkland, whose parents were both rich and titled, said—

“ My dear Eliza, take your cousin into the school-room, and introduce her to the teachers, and any of your particular friends among my pupils, and make her as comfortable as you can, dear. She will soon see how happy you all are here, so I hope to witness no more tears.”

The cousins accordingly withdrew, and whilst they are pursuing their way to the room devoted to tuition we will leave them for awhile, and give a slight sketch of our previous history and that of heroine's her relatives.

CHAPTER II.

Harriette was the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Browne—the former having been for many years rector of the parish of Stoke, a village situated in one of the prettiest parts of Devon, a county well known for the beauty of its scenery and the peculiar softness of its climate. On both sides our little Harriette was well, perhaps we might say highly connected; yet although the estates belonging to Mr. Browne's father extended over a great part of the richest land in Hampshire, yet Edward, the youngest of many sons, was obliged to be content with the moderate income afforded him by the rectory of Stoke, and a small annuity which was settled on his wife.

Not long after entering on his pastoral duties, he sought and obtained in marriage Emily, the daughter of a gentleman who ranked as one of the oldest families in the county of Devon. The vicinity of the young rector to Ashcott House led to a delightful intimacy between himself and this family, which ended in an increasing and deep interest for one of its fair members.

Miss Emily Ashcott was more remarkable for her prettiness, gentleness, and goodness of heart, than for the extent of her fortune; and the strong attachment of the young people towards each other at length overcame the objections of her family to a union which, if they did not consider it absolutely imprudent, was at any rate infinitely below their ambition. And while they yielded an almost unwilling consent to the gratification of Emily's "waywardness," as they deemed it, or what, in fact, was her constancy to this first attachment, they thought of their two other daughters and their son, who doubtless from the sad example of their "romantic" sister would take a warning lesson, and setting

aside their foolish likes and dislikes, would be ready to sacrifice more to the gratification of their parents' pride, and their own ultimate advantage in the world, by securing such partners as would increase and strengthen the family riches and honours.

Edward Browne and his amiable wife lived together more happily than is usually the lot of human beings. They had married from a warm affection founded on esteem, and on a high opinion of the dispositions and mental qualifications of each other; and therefore they were not, and could not be disappointed in the hopes they had formed. And they had for several years experienced no diminution of their first happiness, although their respective families and friends frequently expressed compassion for the "lamentable infatuation" which had brought them into a position so deficient in outward show and luxury. The expressions "poor dear Emily," and "poor Browne," with which this happy couple were so often designated, would have been quite unintelligible to themselves.

For above fifteen years, the even tenor of their way had been uninterrupted, and their happiness almost unsullied, with the exception of those casual annoyances from external causes, to which we all are subject here. They had only two children: Harriette, the eldest, was nearly fourteen, and Edward three years younger. It had been the delight of their father to attend himself entirely to their education. They had always been treated with kindness, yet devoid of all injurious petting, and although Harriette was too thoughtless and gay of spirit to escape correction altogether, yet it had been applied with so much justice and moderation, that the best qualities of her heart had been enlarged and cultivated rather than crushed, as must ever be the case when an uncertain and injudicious rule is exercised. Edward was of a more quiet, tranquil, and reflecting temperament than his sister, and therefore required less care; but she, poor girl, was soon to have an experimental lesson from real life which would make her think more and laugh less.

Mr. Browne had always entertained a great dislike to girls' schools, justly thinking that the greatest care was essential to the formation of the female character, and that the flexible and impressible nature of their minds, so easily

led either to good or evil through the medium of their feelings, required the watchful eye, the anxious care, and constant presence of a parent to guide, correct, and counsel; and that the means by which woman may be made all that is great, and good, and self-denying, were but ill supplied in those nurseries of vanity, selfishness, and display, termed "boarding schools."

For fifteen years, as we have already observed, the happiness of this domestic family remained unbroken, but at the end of this term the pious rector, the kind good father and husband, was called from hence to taste of higher enjoyments; and although the relinquishment of earthly ties which had wound themselves around his heart by a long series of endearments, cost him at parting with them a severe and painful struggle, yet he yielded with true submission to his Master's will.

The death of the good rector was sudden, having been caused by a virulent fever, caught when in the discharge of his pastoral duties, and at the end of ten days from the commencement of his illness, he was lying in his grave—the sun shone brightly on the new-laid turf, and the soft breeze sighed among the willow boughs which grew over the spot where he was calmly sleeping, as if in kindly sympathy with the broken hearts at home. How often do the sights and sounds of Nature succeed in pouring a soothing balm into our torn hearts, which even the tenderness of friends fails to impart! and the sun that shines to gladden, and the breeze that blows to purify and strengthen our physical economy, are but faint emblems of that spiritual invigoration and inward joy, which are given by our Heavenly Father to His children in affliction.

We now turn to the widow. The friends who had gathered round her in her hour of trial—some from etiquette, and some from pure kind feeling and affection—were now dispersed to their several homes. Gentle and patient in disposition, Mrs. Browne possessed also at times a great energy of character, and on the present mournful occasion, while anything was to be done, she had exerted herself for the sake of her children; but she had received a severe shock—a sorrow too deep to seek relief by utterance. No complaint nor murmur had therefore escaped her lips while friends were near, for she had restrained her feelings

in their presence; but this effort was now no longer required, the ceremony of the funeral was over, and the guests departed. Yet not until the evening of that day, when seated in her now lonely drawing-room, with her children by her side, did the full tide of bitterness overflow her heart. Then it was with all that was left her of domestic ties—with her little Harriette and Edward kneeling at her feet, with arms affectionately clasped around her—that the widow wept long and silently. From the hour of her husband's decease the chain seemed broken which had bound her to earth, and her thoughts were now in heaven with the beloved one of her heart.

We must, however, draw a veil over this private sorrow; but it was sad to see one still in the prime of life, who but a few short days before had been the light and joy of her household—now clad in the calm and sombre costume of the widow's weeds—reclining on a couch apparently nerveless and passionless, with her eyes closed, and the tears streaming slowly through their lightly pressed lids. She soon, however, roused herself to caress her dear children, who in their affectionate distress, with arms passed round each other, were still kneeling by their mother's side. But where was he who used to share with her the fond endearments of their smiles and kisses? Oh, where but in the cold, dark, narrow grave! How often is it that a chill, paralyzing sense of death falls back upon the heart—when every action through the day is fraught with memories of the beloved and now absent one! To raise the eye to the bright heaven above, and feel that the Spirit is gone thither, is bliss and sunshine in comparison to the dread thought—that deep conviction of mortality which presses on us at such times—when we reflect that the hand that kindly pressed us, the eye that softly beamed upon us, and the lips that moved only to bless us with their words and smiles, now lie motionless, spiritless, and mouldering in the tomb. This it is which causes us to pause and think what wonderful creatures we must be, how wonderfully formed, how mysteriously sustained, to be enabled to bear such things, and live; and after a few short weeks and months to smile again, and join once more in the affairs and interests of life.

A little more than ten days after the interment of her deceased husband, Mrs. Browne was sitting in her morning

room overlooking and arranging some papers, whilst Harriette was seated beside her at work ; when bidding her to lay aside the task on which she was employed, Mrs. Browne addressed her, and with an affectionate caress, said—

“My dear child, you cannot yet understand the full extent of our loss. There is, however, a great deal yet to be done, and much for your little heart to bear. Young as you are you will, however, have much in your power, if you endeavour to relieve me of even a small part of my burden. You are little more than a child now, but still I have great confidence in the rectitude of your principles and the regulation of your heart, which have been so cultivated and guided by your dear papa. Never forget what he has taught you, my love ; he can teach you now no longer, except by the example which he has left you in his own pious and exemplary life ; and this you must try to remember, and study to imitate. Edward also must be your care, and you will, I hope, endeavour to make him good likewise, by repeating to him all the instruction you have already received. He is your younger brother, and you must therefore study his welfare ; and if we try to do our duty, we must be happy here, and shall hope to meet again in heaven, and be for ever happy. Strive when you are alone to recal to your mind all that your dear papa has taught you from the Scriptures, especially that which will tend to make you practically virtuous. You loved him dearly, and he loved you with a father's tenderest love. Do not weep, my darling, we shall all one day be happy together again, and you and dear Edward must try and do your best to cheer and comfort ‘poor mamma’ with your smiles ; for to see my children contented, dutiful, and happy, is the dearest and only wish of my heart, for I love you both far better than myself. I have still more to say, but do not wish to weary you. You remember the ‘Vicar of Wakefield,’ and reading of the sad parting of that distressed family from their dear home. We have the same heavy task to perform ; we are about, like them, to quit the spot most endeared to us on earth ; we must leave this house and pretty garden, even all your little pets ; we shall be unable to take them with us, for, my love, I am going where you cannot amuse yourselves with the pursuits you have hitherto

delighted in. Do you think that you and Edward can be happy in a town?"

"Oh, yes, yes, dear mamma! how can we be unhappy anywhere with you? We shall all be happy again by and by, and you will always find Edward and me very dutiful and good."

The foregoing conversation has been inserted because it was one which made so deep an impression on Harriette's young mind, that it had a great influence in forming her future character. She felt raised at once from a thoughtless child into a responsible being, one who had high duties to perform both towards her suffering mother and her younger brother, and it was a sweet and interesting sight to witness the increasing care with which from that hour she watched over their comfort and the welfare of them both. And great was the result, in after years, of the energy and self-sacrificing spirit which had been awakened and first roused into action in this hour of tenderness and feeling, when the heart by sorrow had been rendered most susceptible of all that is good and virtuous.

Preparations were soon made for quitting the Parsonage, Harriette and Edward rendering every service to their dear mother which their little hands were able to perform. The melancholy day came at last, and as the chaise drove into the garden, parties of the poor villagers pressed to the door to take their leave, and to shower blessings on the heads of the "good lady and the dear young folk." Not a dry eye was to be seen among the crowd that now flocked round them, and this kindly sympathy and good feeling was to the widow's heart the most grateful offering they could bring, for it was an acknowledgment of the watchful care and liberality which their worthy Rector had exercised during his residence among them, and the affection now shown towards herself and children was the evidence only of what they felt towards him who was now no longer present. And as the carriage passed through the village, the road was lined with men, women, and children, and many little gifts of fresh fruit and flowers were put in at the windows as they drove along.

Mrs. Browne went direct to London to commodious apartments in T—— Street, which had been provided for her by Lady Falkland, who had chosen that situation as

being moderate in expense, and not far distant from her own residence in Portman Square. This lady was an elder sister of the late Mr. Browne's, and had been married many years to Sir Arthur Falkland, a man who, with no pretensions to high family, had obtained his title of knighthood by his large fortune; his wealth enabling him to live in a style which suited well with the tastes of his wife, who had been a very dashing girl some twenty years before, and when Sir Arthur had first seen her whilst on a shooting expedition in Hampshire. No great intimacy had ever existed between Mrs. Browne and her husband's relations; the distance which had hitherto separated them from each other's neighbourhood might have been partly the cause of this, but more probably it arose from the great dissimilarity of tastes, pursuits, and habits of thought, which had presented a barrier to any great intercourse or intimacy between the two families, the gay Lady Falkland and her fashionable style of living according but ill with the quiet, tranquil pleasures of the country clergyman and his family.

For a while, however, during which time the one mourned a departed brother, the other her husband, the ladies met frequently, and Mrs. Browne experienced considerable kindness and attention from both Sir Arthur and Lady Falkland. It had been at the suggestion of the latter that her brother's widow had been induced to take up her abode in town, for she had suggested it, as being more desirable for the education of her niece and nephew, affording them opportunities of better instruction than could be obtained in the country. It was also at the urgent entreaties of Lady Falkland, that her sister-in-law at length yielded to the proposal of Harriette being sent to Forester House, for Mrs. Browne's ill-health had rendered it impossible for her to devote sufficient time to her daughter's studies; and with regard to foreign languages, music and drawing, masters were to be procured at much less expense in a boarding-school than when taking private lessons at home.

One day, after a long and eloquent discussion on the advantages of scholastic education, her ladyship concluded with the following rhetorical sentence—

“In fact, my Eliza is all a fond mother's heart can wish; she has been for the last five years under the care of Mrs. Durett, who has, I must say, done her all possible justice.

Eliza is graceful in figure and carriage, an exquisite dancer, perfect mistress of the harp and piano, sings deliciously, and besides drawing in water colours and chalks very prettily, has acquired a good knowledge of the French, Italian, and German languages; so that"—and the mother's eyes beamed with exultation and delight as her feelings rose with her subject—"so that I hope in the ensuing spring to have the gratification of introducing her to the world, as elegant and accomplished a creature as was ever seen! The dearest wish of my heart for years, as I have watched my child's maturing beauty, has been to see her admired as I was myself at her age; and now I feel assured that I shall not be disappointed, for she far exceeds my fondest hopes!"

The school-room at Forester House was a large uncarpeted chamber, with two long deal tables placed upon trestles running parallel to each other the length of the apartment, while forms of the same wood, worn and browned by age, were ranged round the walls. A few chairs stood together at the end of the apartment for the teachers; and there was a cool, refreshing feeling in the air of this room, with a strong, unpleasant smell of cleanliness—such as is produced by the combined effluvia of soap-suds and deal boards shortly after a scrubbing has taken place. To this was added the less agreeable perfume of dirty school books, and not quite fresh apples, cakes, and oranges, which issued from various large black reticules (which were the fashion in our palmy days), as well as from the stores of "goodies" kept in sundry drawers and cupboards.

As the two cousins Eliza and Harriette entered this school-room arm in arm, a painful number of eyes, beaming with an eager inquisitiveness, were directed towards the new pupil, who, shrinking from such earnest gaze, was led blushing past the young ladies to the end of the room, to be presented to Miss Percivale, the head teacher, and Madame la Rue, the French teacher, and two others who were of subordinate rank in the establishment. The number of Mrs. Durett's pupils at this time amounted to thirty-six, and all these "fair flow'rets" were assembled together talking bad French as fast as they could gabble it. Unhappily Harriette Browne's knowledge of this language was just sufficient to enable her to perceive that they were all

conversing about her in very audible whispers, which ran thus in pure Anglican pronunciation—

“Croyez vous quelle est jolie?”

“Oui, je le pense chère petite. Non assurément, mais elle n'est pas laide.”

“Moi je ne la trouve pas si belle que sa cousine. Qu'il est drôle, je ne crois pas que je l'aimerai.”

“Elle à l'air un peu gauche, il me semble.”

“Eh bien; pour moi je l'aime beaucoup, car elle à l'air d'une si bonne humeur.”

These sentences, uttered by several young ladies who had assembled in little parties to discuss the important question of the personal appearance of their new schoolfellow, fell occasionally on her ear, and somewhat added to the already too evident confusion from which Harriette suffered.

When the ceremony of introduction was concluded, both with the four teachers and a few of Miss Falkland's most particular friends, Miss Browne was invited to take a seat beside her cousin, hardly venturing to raise her eyes, lest she should encounter the seventy-two bright orbs that she felt were still fixedly directed towards her. A tide of blushes were seen to ebb and flow over her fresh young features as she continued to feel the pertinacious regards of her companions, but on their unsensitive hearts Harriette's embarrassment produced little effect. Nor did the pure blush which mounted to her forehead throw any additional charm over her questioned beauty, for they only called it “mauvaise honte.”

For the first two days after the arrival of the new pupil at Forester House, both she and those who addressed her were allowed to speak in English, but after that period a forfeit was to be exacted should she ever accidentally relapse into the vernacular. Miss Falkland and one of her friends, a Miss Ellis, did commence a little conversation with Harriette, but there was a mincing fineness in their manner of speaking so totally unlike anything Harriette had been accustomed to, that instead of amusing or gratifying her, she only felt awkward and embarrassed. Thus passed the first day at school, and welcome indeed to little Harriette was the approach of night, that dear return of repose and freedom which in the dreariest of days can put a period to our sorrow. It was a great relief to find herself within the four

white dimity curtains of her little bed, with her thoughts to herself, and no eyes to scrutinize her nor tongues to question. Her train of thoughts did not flow in a happy course, yet still she could now relieve her oppressed little heart by a plentiful flood of tears, and thus with her last thoughts and prayers for her dear mamma and Edward, she fell asleep.

Poor child! it was the first night in her life that she had gone to bed without one kind caress from those who loved her, and though this may appear trifling in after life, when any feeling of affection is termed morbid, and ridiculed by strong-minded, practical people, yet at that early age it was a bitter feeling to think that there was no one near to love or care about her in that large house!

The room in which she slept contained eight little bedsteads besides her own, all having dimity furniture to match. A teacher, acting in the capacity of detective police, slept in each of the apartments devoted to the use of the young ladies, to prevent them from carrying into execution any of those mischievous pranks of which the fertile imaginations of school boys and school girls are usually so prolific. Miss Percivale was the "matron of the family," as it was termed, to which Harriette Browne belonged. Before this arrangement had been made, the girls occupying the west room had been in the habit (for some time before the discovery of what was termed the Coffee Plot) of getting up in the middle of the night, after the household had retired to rest, for the purpose of indulging themselves in an occasional feast of good things. It had previously been arranged on this occasion, by the clique of choice spirits occupying the west room, before going home for the holidays, that Miss Gordon should bring back some wax candles, Miss Russel a spirit-lamp and boiler; Miss Boulton and the rest were to supply spirit for burning, coffee, tea, sugar, and plenty of cakes and biscuits, paste-chocolate, and any other dainties which could be either bought at the pastrycook's, or purloined from their mothers' dessert table. These were to comprise the essentials for many a nocturnal festivity.

Several of these delicious stolen midnight pic-nics had been enjoyed by the young ladies, and if any one of them went home for the day she usually returned with some addition to the store in the way of confections, tarts, or

hard-boiled eggs. On one of these visits to her aunt, Miss Scott brought back a cold fowl and some sausages which she had begged of the old cook, and they were conveyed to school in one of those indispensable and dainty receptacles, a black velvet bag. This kind of refreshment was, however, considered by her school-fellows as so far from "ladylike and genteel," that although its merits were highly appreciated while partaking of it, yet it was prohibited for the future.

But these delights were destined to a brief existence. One night the clock had long struck twelve; all was ready for enjoyment; the coffee had been boiled, and was just poured into the eight little tooth-mugs; the fairy circle was seated on the floor in the middle of the room, habited in their long white flannel robes, forming a circle around the candle and the spirit-lamp, and each armed with her ration of cake, when the door of the chamber was suddenly thrown open with considerable noise, and Mrs. Durett, appearing, to the terrified imaginations of her pupils, in fearful and gigantic relief, larger than life, and twice as natural, presented herself. In an instant the room was cleared, and nothing remained to the bewildered sight of the astonished governess but the candle, the tin warmer, and the eight little steaming mugs. At the first alarm, the offenders had flitted out of sight like a party of pixies disturbed in their nightly revels, and had sought shelter within the narrow curtains of their beds, and with heads concealed underneath the clothes, lay trembling with apprehension, or laughing at the joke, as their various humours of grave or gay disposed them. It was too late that night for Mrs. Durett to take any strong measures, and so having emptied the contents of the several cups into the warmer, she caught it up, together with the spirit-lamp and the candle, and what fragments of food lay scattered about the floor, for each young lady had rushed off with her portion of cake in her hand. The angry governess then said, in a voice stifled with rage, and which sounded in the ears of her conscience-stricken pupils both ominous and sepulchral—

"Very well, young ladies, I shall see you all early to-morrow morning, when I shall have decided how to act by you," and with these vague and fearful words she closed the door, and turned the key on the outside.

The following day the culprits were kept close prisoners in their sleeping apartment, without having seen any one since the awful vision of their angry mistress had exhibited itself on the previous night, when at noon, trembling with fear and the want of their breakfasts, they were summoned to present themselves before Mrs. Durett, and they accordingly descended to the school-room. There sat the judgess on her tribunal, and great and awe-inspiring was the look of indignation and of pure unmitigated justice which gleamed on her countenance, and penetrated the hearts of the young offenders. They were at once, without the aid of counsel, witness, or jury, convicted of "exceedingly naughty conduct," and were condemned to have dry bread for breakfast and tea, and no pudding at dinner, for three successive days; to stand at a side-table by themselves instead of sitting with the other pupils; to be kept in doors while their companions took their afternoon walks; and, in addition, were to learn by rote, with the exception of the one hundredth and nineteenth, three of the longest Psalms, in French. After this direful sentence had been pronounced by Mrs. Durett on the offenders, she favoured them with an eloquent, affecting, and prolonged harangue, tending to prove "how very ungrateful such behaviour was, entering most touchingly on her own exceeding kindness to all her pupils, and particularly evinced in the lenity of her punishments on the present occasion, plainly showing how much they were all bound to love her, and concluded by expressing the surprise and mortification she had experienced on finding that she was surrounded by 'such hard, unfeeling hearts, and these amongst her greatest favourites.'"

When Harriette Browne came as a pupil to Forester House, the same young ladies occupied the west room, with the addition, indeed, of the head teacher as a watch or safeguard, and the exception of Miss Scott, who having on several occasions proved herself a "most dangerous and naughty person," her parents had been requested to remove her.

But to return from this digression: Harriette's dreams about mamma and home were disturbed at six o'clock in the morning by the voice of Miss Wilmot, the half-boarder; whose duty it was to call the pupils, and perform for them the office of abigail, it being considered detrimental to the

figure of a young lady to dress herself. When it came to Miss Browne's turn to be "fastened" or "done," she exclaimed eagerly, "No, I thank you, I will not trouble you, I have always been accustomed to dress myself; you are very kind, but why should you wait on me?—cannot I assist you?"

A titter burst simultaneously from the lips of all present, including also a sneering laugh from Miss Percivale. This caused Harriette and poor Miss Wilmot to colour painfully, and for a few moments to look and feel quite put out of countenance. But the latter soon recovered herself, and placing her finger on her lip, to intimate to Harriette the propriety of her silence, said with a sweet placidity of manner—

"It is a part of my duty to dress the ladies; I am the half-boarder, Miss Browne."

Harriette persisted in resisting all offers of assistance, and Miss Wilmot turned to dress some one else, and shortly after quitted the room. This circumstance surprised our little novice very much, for Mary Wilmot looked as gentle and ladylike as any of her other companions, and indeed more so than many of them; and she had a slender, delicate hand, which did not seem formed for waiting on others. Harriette was therefore greatly interested for the poor girl, there being a sweetness in her manner, and a meek and patient expression on her countenance, which made her anxious to know the previous history of so interesting a person, and the circumstances which could make it necessary for her to act as a menial to those who were apparently her equals in point of station.

On descending to the school-room, and for many hours afterwards, Harriette was too much occupied by the multiplicity of her own affairs to allow her time to think further about the half-boarder. On going into the school-room, she entertained considerable fears of encountering again the ardent gaze of her schoolfellows, which had caused her so much embarrassment on the preceding day; but the morning passed off much better than she had anticipated, for all the pupils were so engaged with their own duties, that little time was left them to bestow their attention on the stranger. The examination as to her little store of knowledge and her various acquirements went off tolerably well. The only

thing worthy of remark, and which was rather disagreeable to her was, that whenever Harriette happened to stumble in her reading, made a mistake, or was guilty of a false pronunciation in her French lesson, to which her present nervousness and anxiety made her more than usually liable, her school-fellows made a point of looking up each time, while madame was heard to mutter, in an under tone which was quite audible to the object of her censure, "*Qu'elle est bête!*" which, it is needless to say, greatly added to her confusion.

There was a want of politeness and good feeling evident in this conduct, and in many other little incidents that occurred, which caused the simple and country-bred Miss Browne much surprise, as she expected, in a first-rate school in the metropolis, to find nothing but what was elegant and refined, but she was only learning early a lesson we all acquire sooner or later, that the refinement and delicacy of feeling which constitutes true politeness belongs not to a class nor clique, nor can easily be taught, for its source and spring are in a pure, unselfish, noble heart, which may dwell in a cottage, and which we may fail to find in a palace. Our little heroine, much as these things vexed her at first, soon rose superior to such petty provocations. She determined to pause and look about before forming any hasty friendships, but at the same time to use all means, and to receive any little kindness, which might tend towards establishing a good understanding between herself and her new companions.

For nearly one week Miss Falkland continued very kind to her; they walked and talked together, and Eliza lent her many books, assisted her in the lessons, and endeavoured to initiate her into the ways of the school. Still, though she was as "kind as could be," there was something in Eliza's manner which was far from congenial to her cousin's feelings. Harriette was of a very affectionate disposition, perfectly sincere and candid in all she said and did, and therefore, judging by her own honest little heart, she was disposed to think well of Eliza; and although her manner was perfectly different from that to which she had hitherto been accustomed, and some of her cousin's sentiments she could not quite understand or approve, yet,

nevertheless, she encouraged a sort of love for Eliza, arising from gratitude for the many little kindnesses and favours of which we have spoken. This feeling would probably have soon ripened into a strong friendship between them, had not an incident occurred which made it impossible for two persons of such opposite characters and dispositions to assimilate.

CHAPTER III.

Eliza Falkland possessed every attraction which was calculated to win our love and esteem. She was beautiful in face and figure, her manners were sweet and gentle, and she was certainly endowed with talents which might have secured her the love and admiration of all around her. But she was the victim of an unbounded vanity, and her mind unfortunately was not sufficiently strong to steer so precious a freight through the world of fashion and of folly to which she was destined. She was, however, considered by the whole community at Forester House as a perfect non-pareil. Whether she had not by her own self-adulation been the means of establishing this opinion among her schoolfellows cannot, perhaps, be determined; but it is more than probable that it was so.

Applause was her idol; every action was guided, every thought was tarnished with a spirit of vain glory and a love of display; and to free herself from even the shadow of blame she would have recourse to any species of *finesse*, and would even stoop to shelter herself at the expense of another.

One morning, Eliza and Harriette were in the music room, whither they had gone for the purpose of practising a duet on the piano and harp. This was a very pretty room, in which Mrs. Durett was in the habit of receiving company when the drawing-room was occupied, and in it was placed a stand of very choice plants. The cousins after having concluded the one hour's practice were leaving the room together, when the sleeve of Eliza's dress brushed against a camellia, and threw it down. She turned very pale on perceiving the mischief she had done, and that the delicate white flower was detached from its stem, and

lying on the floor at a little distance from the plant. She soon rallied from her alarm, and immediately commenced removing all traces of the accident. She replaced the flower-pot, which was fortunately uninjured, gathered up in her delicate hands the scattered earth, and brushing what remained into the corner with her handkerchief, she finished all by balancing the flower, on whose untimely fate so much was to depend that day, so carefully between two leaves, that it did not appear at all to have been disturbed. Harriette had remained a passive spectator of the whole proceeding, until this last act of deception was effected, when she could no longer refrain from speaking, and exclaimed—

“Oh! Eliza, surely you will not do that?”

“What nonsense, child!” replied her cousin, “not put it back? What, do you suppose I would suffer myself to be blamed when I may avoid it all by a little good management? Besides which the flower is of no consequence, and when it has withered, as it will do by the evening, I can easily slip in here again, and put it on the floor, as if it had fallen there of its own accord, and to-morrow who will know anything about it? But do not stare so, child, as if you were frightened. I know how to manage my own affairs, I suppose, by this time, for I am older than you are, and have been much longer at school too! And, dear Harriette,” caressing her while she spoke, “you will not say anything about it, dearest, will you? You will not, if you love me, and you know that I have been very kind to you ever since you came here.”

Harriette felt the full force of this last argument, and never being inclined to act ill-naturedly, she promised not to mention the subject unless she should be required to give an answer; and after receiving many thanks from Eliza, who folded her in an affectionate embrace, intended, of course, to seal her silence, the friends returned together to the school-room.

The day passed calmly over; no mention of the accident occurred. Mrs. Durett came down in state as usual in the evening, and immediately after prayers, which was the awful hour chosen by her for the administering of justice, she prepared herself and her auditors for the discussion of some grave and important subject. This was done by uttering two or three fearful tones intended, of course, to

clear her voice before entering on a painful duty. These were truly dreadful to hear, under any circumstances, but to the experienced ear always portended evil. This noise, which very much resembled the cry of seagulls when flying inland on the approach of a storm, was likewise a forerunner of Mrs. Durett's moral tempests, and therefore excited no little alarm among her pupils. After several of these painful efforts, she commenced in a shrill and grating voice as follows—

"It is with very great vexation that I am now compelled to speak, young ladies; and it is no trivial circumstance to which I feel it my painful duty at present to advert. It has occasioned me very great distress, and I blush to feel that I have a pupil in this house who has proved herself capable of an act of mean deception. One among you has been this morning in the music-room, and has very carelessly overturned and broken off the flower of my beautiful japonica. It is not with this that I am going to find fault, for I doubt not but that it was accidental, and, as such, would not have met with any great severity from me. But I can hardly express to you my sensations when I perceived, that in order to conceal from me what might have incurred blame, the earth was brushed away into the corner, and the flower, which must have been separated in the fall, replaced near its stem. Now, I desire that the young lady who has been guilty, I may say, of such naughty conduct, will immediately rise."

No one moved. Harriette's cheek glowed in shame and pity for her cousin, and had it been sufficiently light in the part of the room where she was seated for her to have been observed, her emotion might have been considered as sufficient evidence to have convicted her; but, fortunately, she escaped the odium of suspicion, and, after a long pause, Mrs. Durett again raised her voice—

"Then since this young lady seems to be so totally lost to all sense of probity and honesty, I must proceed to further measures. If it is not confessed to-night, I shall double all the lessons for to-morrow; silence shall be imposed for two whole days, and I will not allow one word to be exchanged among you. Miss Percivale," turning to the head teacher as she spoke, "you will have the goodness to see that the mark for speaking is rigidly passed, and I

wish it to be called in three times during both days. But perhaps, Miss Percivale, you may be able to assist me in discovering the *petite méchante* who is giving me all this trouble, and exposing her innocent companions to a punishment which she only deserves. Is there any one whom you can at all suspect?—any one whom you know to have been in the music-room this morning?”

Miss Percivale was a person greatly addicted to favouritism; she was of ordinary birth, being the daughter of a small farmer, and had been educated for an English teacher, but beyond her knowledge of school books, her ideas were of a very narrow and confined order. She had experienced a hard life, having lost her mother during her infancy, and her father being a man of very morose and violent temper. Now placed in power, she was led, as fags have been known to do at Winchester and other public schools, to pay off the sum of grievances accumulated on her own head, upon the unhappy girls who afterwards fell under her jurisdiction. Thus Miss Percivale, who, by her own previous sufferings both at home and at school, ought to have learnt tenderness and consideration for the feelings of others, now indulged in every species of meanness and ill-nature which could give vent to her mortified and soured disposition. She never, however, suffered this to interfere with her interest. She liked to favour those pupils who, from station and affluence, had it in their power to confer on her handsome presents as tokens of their love and gratitude for her kindness; and to erect herself into consequence with them, she always expressed a sovereign contempt for those who appeared less favoured by Fortune, and whose style of living was moderate, hating, as she termed it, everything that was “low and vulgar.”

These subjects were, however, sufficiently considered by the young ladies themselves, and required no encouragement or countenance from their instructors; but it is very usual with little minds, to feel that while expatiating on the defects or inferiority of others, they are raising themselves in the scale of importance. Such, we believe, were the feelings and motives which actuated the whole of Miss Percivale's conduct.

On being addressed, therefore, by Mrs. Durett, the head-teacher rose, and looked around her. There was a little

Scotch girl, named Susan Duncan, who had always less pocket-money than any of her schoolfellows, was very ill-dressed, and whose mamma had several times been known to call at Forester House in a hackney-coach. Poor little Susan was consequently very much neglected, and not unfrequently twitted about the hackney-coach; besides which, there was another little circumstance which caused her to shed many tears, as it exposed her to a great deal of quizzing from her companions. Miss Percivale had one day cross-examined her respecting her pocket-money, and found that all she had brought for the half year was one sixpence and two pennies, which was the change given at a pastry-cook's, where her mamma had treated her on her way to school with two Bath buns.

Miss Percivale was heard to say on one occasion that she had imbibed a most unaccountable dislike of Miss Duncan, and she soon discovered various reasons for believing her to be "very sly, cunning, and mischievous." She also now remembered that she had seen little Susan coming from the music-room in the morning, and therefore proposed to Mrs. Durett her being examined.

Miss Duncan was accordingly summoned from the ranks, and she had scarcely reached the table, covered with scarlet cloth, having a small lamp placed on it, at which Mrs. Durett was seated, when she burst into tears, and sobbed so violently, that there was no possibility of extracting one syllable from her. This conduct was just about to convict her, when Harriette, who could no longer restrain her feelings of indignation at such injustice, started from her seat, and with a voice trembling from agitation, exclaimed—

"It was not Miss Duncan that knocked down the plant, ma'am, it was my cousin Eliza."

There was an awful silence for a full minute, while Harriette stood fixed in the middle of the room, where her eagerness had carried her, paralyzed at the daring part she had acted, when Mrs. Durett said—

"Miss Falkland! Is it possible? Mesdames, you may retire. Miss Percivale and Miss Falkland, remain with me, if you please."

What passed when the rest had quitted the room was never known to any but the trio now left in the school-room, Miss Falkland, the head pupil, and the greatest

favourite, was not to be subjected to a public examination or reprimand, and therefore we must conclude that with everything in her favour, the exalted position she held in the mind of Mrs. Durett, the circumstance of her being about to leave the school at the end of the half year, her winning ways, and the tears and contrition which she doubtless expressed, and above all the interest of her attached friend, Miss Percivale, succeeded in palliating the offence and satisfying the justice of the recently highly exasperated governess.

When Eliza came to the bedroom Harriette perceived that she had been weeping, and they both fell asleep without exchanging a word. The following morning the aspect of affairs wore a strange appearance in the eyes of Harriette, for on Miss Falkland's entry into the school-room she was greeted with a greater number of caresses and *chères Elises* than was usual, and to one unacquainted with the circumstances, it might have appeared that she had probably distinguished herself by some generous and noble action which had thus claimed the admiration and the love of her companions, while, on the contrary, poor Harriette, by an odd reversion of the order of justice, encountered only dark looks and frowns, and felt herself to be under universal condemnation. All that was said to her or of her consisted of direct or indirect reproaches for her "shameful mean behaviour to her dear cousin." Not one word was uttered of the unmerited blame from which she had freed poor little Susan.

"How could you, Miss Browne, be so ill-natured as to try and get our dear, kind Eliza into disgrace?" said one.

"Oh, don't speak to her, you know she did not succeed in her spite, and the next time she wishes to be spiteful she had better choose some one she is more likely to hurt, for dear Eliza is too great a pet and favourite with Mrs. Durett and all of us to be injured by anything *she* can say," said another.

"Oh, yes, to be sure, she's a cross, trumpery little thing, nobody cares for her, nor for anything she can say," echoed a third.

These speeches gave Harriette considerable pain at first, but, like Mawworm in the Hypocrite, she soon found that the more she was despised the prouder she grew. But

although she greatly increased in pride or independence of character, she did not increase in happiness. She could not bend to seek companions so ill suited to her, and who seemed but too ready to shun her. She became every day more uncomfortable, and sighed to be again with her "dear, kind, good mamma, with whom she had never been otherwise than happy."

She therefore bethought her in her loneliness of Miss Wilmot, who had before excited her interest and curiosity, and in a Quixotic spirit determined, if she could not luxuriate in the sympathy and friendship of those about her, she would institute herself as the champion of the oppressed. Little Duncan's gratitude also was extreme, which afforded Harriette some gratification, and many pretty little opportunities did Susan avail herself of for showing her increasing affection to her kind friend. Thus encouraged, and in pursuance of her noble design, Harriette determined to seek an early opportunity of finding out and redressing the grievances under which the sensitive half-boarder was suffering.

CHAPTER IV.

We must now beg leave to introduce to our readers the most eccentric and entertaining character in the establishment at Forester House, one on whose memory her pupils still love to dwell, and whose absurdities caused the greatest possible amusement to them during her transient *sojourn* at Mrs. Durett's; for her temper was so violent that she could not be retained for more than one half year.

This was no less important an individual than Madame La Rue, the French teacher. She was rather under than above the middle stature, robust and clumsy in form; and the coquettish air of her short dress of more than usually ample dimensions, seemed but ill to accord with the native awkwardness of her appearance.

Her features, although regularly handsome, were of a very masculine character, her head large, and such as would have done infinite justice to the cap or helmet of a Life Guardsman. She always wore rouge, and there was a dark shade on the upper lip. Considering, however, the very great care she took daily, with a delicate pair of scissors, she would have been highly incensed, had any one presumed to breathe that madame sported an incipient moustache. She had fine black eyes, and a profusion of jetty locks fell in long and glossy ringlets over her face, much resembling what we may imagine to have been the appearance of the serpentine decorations on the head of Alecto.

As we have before observed, Madame La Rue was of a fiery temper, but we will omit to make any further remarks on the defects of her character, and leave the reader to conclude that, like Madame Blaze—

“ She never wanted a good word
From those who spoke her praise.”

She had, however, a few innocent peculiarities which we cannot refrain from noticing. She took a great deal of snuff, which she always purchased of her fair country-woman, whose *affiche* emblazoned in large gold characters hung over her shop, and ran thus—

“Madame La Gremme
Sells tabac d'Etrene,
And hopes que tu prennes
A pinch of the semme” (same).

She carried a large clasp knife and fork and a silver tea spoon in her pocket, eat the greatest part of her dinner with her fingers, and had a little French poodle dog which always slept with her. Her most conspicuous fault was an intense curiosity; so great was it that she was not unfrequently known to listen outside the door of a room, for the purpose of overhearing what was going on within.

A circumstance, however, occurred one day which was likely to check this propensity in madame, when two of her pupils, in a fit of strong affection for each other, had retired to their sleeping apartment for the purpose of having a good gossip, and “talking secrets.”

We must digress a little for the purpose of explaining the origin and process of a boarding school friendship, which is established thus :

Two young ladies are, by accident, thrown a little more together for a time, perhaps from having the same lesson to learn, some duet to practice together; or one renders the other some trifling assistance in writing her Italian or French theme. A deep interest and sympathy are instantly excited in their gentle bosoms, they rush into each other's arms, and swear an eternal, unextinguishable affection ! The next thing to be done is to evince a perfect trust and confidence in the newly acquired, yet “deeply loved friend,” and this consists in telling each other any, or all, the nonsense that their fertile imaginations can devise; and anything which (as naturally happens) is inexpressibly silly, and they would be ashamed of having repeated, they dignify with the appropriate term of “a secret.” The mutual possession of this invaluable trash is indeed the most effectual tie between the two parties, for as in case of a rupture neither would any longer consider herself bound to

secrecy, and both have some reason to fear treachery, they are thus united together by the strongest of all links, that of self-interest.

Miss Gordon had one morning gone through this deeply interesting and affecting scene, this compact of amity and alliance, and wound up the whole by assuring Miss Ellis that "while she remained on earth her Emily should never need a friend."

After which they went to their room together, and Miss Ellis was in the midst of pouring into Miss Gordon's ready ear an account of some lover, either fancied or real, some beau ideal probably which she had suffered her poetic fancy to create solely (as we believe is constantly the case) for the mere pleasure of having a love-tale and a secret to divulge, when, fully aware of madame's propensity, Miss Gordon thought she heard a slight rustling outside the door. She therefore peeped through the key-hole, and on the stairs immediately below the door stood Madame La Rue, her ear inclined towards the room, and her face turned the other way.

This was too good an opportunity to be lost, and Miss Gordon was too full of fun and mischief to resist the temptation. A large black cat lay on one of the beds; she gently turned, caught it up, and suddenly opening the door, threw it violently forward on the top of madame's head.

The scream that followed was long and terrific, and soon brought every member of the establishment to the spot. Before they arrived, however, Miss Gordon was seized by the shoulders, and well shaken in the powerful arms of the injured and enraged Amazon, called a "*détestable petite bête*," and dragged off to the presence of Mrs. Durett, who, with becoming dignity, was the only person in the house whose equanimity had been undisturbed by the screams of madame. It was very easy to bring evidence of the atrocity of Miss Gordon's conduct, for some trifling scratches had made their appearance through the thick coat of rouge on the French lady's cheek, and her cap and curls were sadly deranged; she avoided any mention of the provocation which she had herself given for such treatment, or of the punishment which she had already inflicted on the culprit. She therefore only said that for the express purpose of in-

sulting her Miss Gordon had thrown the great "chat" at her, when she was quietly walking down the stairs, that it had very nearly knocked her down, and ended by almost persuading herself and her auditors that her life had been exposed to imminent danger.

Miss Gordon was not sufficiently daring to assert in her defence that she had only intended to punish Madame La Rue for her mean trick of listening at the door; nor, had she done so, would it have availed her much. Mrs. Durett was extremely displeased, and seemed to agree with the complainant in thinking that no punishment could be too severe for one who had been guilty of such "unladylike, outrageous conduct."

They therefore required that she should immediately beg pardon of madame, condemn her to learn four long psalms in French, to be in disgrace until they were said; and the following day being that on which M. Benoit was in the habit of attending to give his dancing lesson, Miss Gordon, the unhappy Miss Gordon, was doomed to stand in the stocks during the whole time he was there, excepting when required to receive his instructions.

For the benefit of those gentle readers who have never suffered from this horrid implement of scholastic torture, and who are, perhaps, scarce aware of its existence, we will endeavour to give a description of the stocks. The one in use at Forester House was a strong oblong box, standing about three feet from the ground, only sufficiently wide to admit the stoutest girl. One end was removed to form an entrance, and at the bottom were two deep grooves, forming an angle so obtuse, that it nearly approached a straight line. These were made to receive the feet of the unfortunate victim, who would, from the extreme awkwardness of the position, have been in danger of falling, had she not been supported before and behind by the walls of this diminutive prison-house.

This surely might with great propriety be termed an "unhandsome fix." As soon as the offender was fairly settled in the stocks, a large back-board was placed in her hands. No account need be given of this instrument, for all must be aware of its shape and use; but we feel a hope that few, very few, have ever experienced the accumulated

miseries of stocks and back-board at the same time, and to this punishment poor Miss Gordon was now sentenced.

The following day Miss Gordon was scarcely settled into the stocks, when M. Benoit entered the dancing-room. After making several solemn and most studied bows, à la minuet, to the ladies assembled, he turned his eyes at length on Miss Gordon, and shrugging his shoulders so high that his head was apparently buried in his breast, whilst he raised his short arms, his kit in one hand, and his bow in the other, in an attitude of dismay, exclaimed—

“Ah ! quel malheur ! Mademoiselle Gourdon, c'est vous ? Ah ! que vois-je ?”

We are afraid to say that the offender was more inclined to laugh than she ought to have been ; but the suppression of this tendency suffused her cheeks with a crimson glow, which answered all the purposes of a blush of shame.

But if any sentiment of pity had for a moment been excited in M. Benoit towards the young lady, it was quickly succeeded by that of indignation, when madame had narrated to him the history of the outrage committed on herself, heightened with every exaggeration which could serve to aggravate the enormity of Miss Gordon's conduct.

From a national feeling, we conclude, the French gentleman was supposed to entertain a decided penchant for his charming countrywoman, and after having, as the tale proceeded, evidenced his deep sympathy with the sufferings of Madame La Rue, and his indignation at the astounding wickedness of their pupil, by every species of grimace of which his flexible countenance was capable, he at length exclaimed—

“Parbleu ! je n'ai jamais rien vue de si abominable. Elle a osé ?”

“Jetter un chat ! c'est bien digne d'une Anglaise. Elles sont d'une hardiesse envers leurs maîtres et maîtresses. Non, non, un chat ? Je n'en reviens pas. Au moins vous la punirez bien j'espère.”

Encouraged by this sortie against her méchante élève, the delighted governess replied—

“Ouida je pense bien la punir, et saurai lui prouver que de tels procédés, ne sauraient être bien reçus de personne, et moins encore par moi—pensez donc—figurez vous !

M. Benoit, un chat jetté à la tête de Madame Campan à Paris, et par une des demoiselles de son pensionnat!"

After this burst of displeasure the sensation subsided, monsieur commenced the scraping on his violin, and the dancing began.

Miss Gordon had, however, irretrievably lost the good opinion of M. Benoit. Hitherto she had ranked high amongst his best pupils, and was a decided favourite; but now all was changed, and never during the rest of the time that she remained at school did she receive from him one particle of commendation, not even for her most laudable hops.

Another anecdote must be added relative to Madame La Rue, now we are on so interesting a subject, and because it excited great merriment among the young ladies for some time after it happened. The tender sentiment which existed between her and the maître de danse has already been alluded to. When, therefore, he was expected to visit Forester House for the discharge of his vocation, it was very natural that madame should wish to appear to the greatest possible advantage, and she therefore always bedecked herself with more scrupulous attention to effect than usual. She was more highly rouged for these occasions (for her Jaques also painted brown and red), her locks were favoured with an additional portion of huile de mille fleurs, and, like Mrs. Heidelberg, her best cap was prepared for the "runcounter."

On these days she would hurry from the dinner-table before the cloth was removed, that she might have more time to bestow on the anxious duties of the toilette; and the first tones of the discordant tuning of the violin which sounded in her ears, were the signal for her entry into the dancing-room. The affected *gaieté de cœur* which she assumed was exaggerated to the highest pitch of absurdity, by the mixture of airs and attitudes, intended to be graceful, with the natural vulgarity of her appearance and manner. Then came the "nods and becks, and wreathed smiles," the interchange of which was also very amusing. Monsieur, in the performance of his part, figured about on the points of his delicate little feet, shrugging his shoulders, and gracefully flourishing his bow, while madame advanced, retired, curtsied, simpered, and tried to look diffident and

pretty. Encouraged by so many attractions, he respectfully took her hand, and measuring each step with great punctilio, and a certain happy little prance, led her to a seat at the top of the room. He then turned to his vocation, and during the instruction of his pupils, carried on a broken and side-long conversation with madame.

"Mademoiselle Broderick, vos epaules. Ah! ces maudites epaules! La pointe des pieds en dehors. Allons en avant deux."

Still continuing his playing, he would return to the side of his belle, and inclining his head towards her, as if trying to get out of the sound of his own insufferable noise, address her thus—

"Vous demander, madame, de nouvelles de votre santé, serait douter de moi-même car vous avez l'air char.—La, la, la, Mademoiselle Louise, prenez donc garde, de la mesure. Vous avez l'air charmant, madame; cette couleur vous sied à merveille. Allons, mademoiselle, *chose*, allons sautez petite lourde allons. N'ayez pas l'air si gauche;" and turning once more to Madame La Rue with an ineffable smile, he said—"En leurs enseignant à former leurs pas, c'est vous quelles doivent imiter pour danser avec grace."

Thus sweetly passed the dancing day with madame and monsieur.

But one ill-fated afternoon, when M. Benoit was expected, and the French teacher had been detained longer in the school-room after dinner than was agreeable to her, or favourable for her toilet, she hastened, however, to arrange her dress, but scarce was the pleasant task begun, when she heard the thrilling squeak of "his" little kit.

Ah! how her hand trembled betwixt hurry and agitation, as she laid the beautifully combed "front" upon the dressing table. A more than usually profuse quantity of mille fleurs had been applied, and each hair was closely linked with its companion in the oily mass; the vermilion glowed brightly on her cheeks; her dress was adjusted with the most exquisite nicety, and nothing remained to be done, but the mounting of the all-conquering peruque and her gayest cap—

"A moment fraught with dire event."

She turned to put some eau de Cologne on her handker-

chief, when Fanchon, her little dog, who had hitherto been quietly playing about the room, and occasionally watching her mistress's operations, now made a sudden spring at the wig, caught it in her teeth, and with the assistance of her paws and a few shakes, freed it from all appearance of curl, and divested it of every attraction which could add beauty to the brow of its fair wearer.

Madame uttered shrieks of terror and dismay when she perceived the injury she had sustained. The noise acting, we suppose, on the conscience of poor Fanchon, greatly frightened her, and the doors favouring her escape, away she bounded from the room, down the stairs, and in she flew among the dancers. Her presence excited a sensation and some tittering among the young ladies; but how much greater did it become when madame herself also entered the apartment! She rushed into the room in an agony of feeling, forgetful of her own ridiculous appearance, her bald head being but partially concealed by a small close brown silk cap, unmindful also of the presence of her admirer, forgetful of all but the important object of saving her locks from being torn to pieces by her mischievous little dog.

Fanchon, who seemed to enjoy the fun as much as the young ladies, contrived to escape with equal agility every attempt made to stop her, as well as all the blows levelled at her, and gambolled up and down the room, alternately wagging her own snowy tail and shaking madame's raven frontlet in her mouth.

M. Benoit, alarmed and distressed at the accident, thought no longer of his pupils, and with his bow *à la main*, joined in the chase, cutting the empty air with this delicate weapon of offence. Fanchon, who still continued to avoid all the efforts made to catch her, after running playfully about the room to her heart's content, now added to the scene by making her exit, and the door of the house being open out she went into the square.

Off flew the good natured, obliging dancing master, blind to the sensation which his appearance must create amongst the passengers, blind to everything but his one wish of serving his lady-love. He soon succeeded with the assistance of a tender hearted and ingenious dustman in catching the little animal, and, returning to the room while still gasping for breath, presented to the grateful Madame La

Rue the naughty dog with one hand, and her dishevelled tresses with the other.

The scene that followed was delightful; not yet recollecting the absurdity of her appearance, she assumed her utmost graciousness of deportment, and tossed her head, and bowed, and curtsied with as much affectation and gaiety of manner as if all had been right, and her head and face had still been adorned with their usual quantum of ribbon, blonde, and jetty ringlets. She soon, however, bethought her of her strange appearance, and then retired in much confusion to re-arrange the tattered curls and to adjust her head-dress.

CHAPTER V.

"Miss Wilmot, come here," cried Miss Percivale; "go up stairs now, and take with you Miss Lucy Fordice, Miss Burrows, and Miss Fanny Stephens. Here, young ladies, go with Miss Wilmot directly." And turning again to the half-boarder, "And do you finish cleaning their heads rather better than you did yesterday, or I will tell Mrs. Durett of your idleness; their hair is not fit to be seen; and when you've done that thoroughly, come to me again and I will tell you what to do next. You know you did not come here, ma'am, to give yourself airs and be above the work that is required of you; or to be always poring over your books and amusing yourself with your accomplishments indeed, like the young ladies! Besides which, there are all the stockings to be mended—eighteen pairs; and they shall be all done, if you please, before you go to bed to-night, so that you can't go out with us this afternoon, mind that."

Miss Wilmot walked quietly out of the room, the little girls following her, without making any reply or evincing by any change of countenance or manner that she was wounded by this coarse unfeeling language; neither did she appear to feel any resentment towards the person who addressed her in terms so unnecessarily harsh and unkind. Indeed, there was an expression of deep melancholy in her features, as if she had been long accustomed to ill usage, which indicated that no additional pain could be inflicted on her by either words or manner. It was a callous look, although the general character of her face was sweet, and when kindly spoken to was lighted up with an unusual degree of animation and sensibility.

And this young girl, who was so early exposed to suffering, was well born, and in mind and person fitted to adorn any society she might have been placed in. But she was a half-boarder in a ladies' seminary, and this subjected her to neglect and ill treatment, and imposed on her services which one young lady ought never to receive from another. The arrangement which gave Miss Wilmot the advantages of a good education at Forester House required of her many servile offices to be rendered to those who were her superiors in nothing but in fortune.

Mary Wilmot was in person slight and very tall for her age; she had light brown hair, which fell in profuse ringlets around her fair face, descending almost to the shoulder; her features were delicate, and her eyes clear and of a bright blue; she was dressed very simply, and although her frock was not calculated to display her figure to any great advantage, it could not conceal the beautiful symmetry of her form.

To get up an hour before the rest of the ladies, and while the teachers were indulging in bed, so as to perform any of the offices of a nursery-maid for the younger children, and to "fasten" the elder ones, was Mary's first duty in the morning. To curl the hair at night of those who were incapable of doing it for themselves, and to brush and comb it out in the morning, and thoroughly to clean ten or twelve heads once a week; to overlook the clothes which had been worn, to mend and count them for the wash, to keep the drawers and presses in order, and assist in seeing that the clothes came back right in number from the laundress—these were among the most degrading offices which poor Mary had to perform.

To even this the poor girl might by use have become reconciled, and yielded to her duties without a sigh, but the unceasing contumely which she met with from all around her, sunk to her very heart. She was most truly lonely; not one in the establishment seemed to consider her in the light of an equal, she was an outcast among them; if seen either in the garden or in the house she was always alone. Too sensitive and too proud perhaps to appear to seek society or intimacy with those who might either think their notice of her a condescension on their part, or who should accuse her of presumption in striving to place herself on an

equality with them, she retired within herself and seemed to shrink from their observation.

All she could do when any circumstance of peculiarly unfeeling vulgarity was practised towards her, was when alone to clasp her delicate long fingers together, and in an agony of tears to lift her eyes and thoughts to heaven, to the only Friend who knew and saw her struggle, and who would pity and support her in her hour of trial. And great indeed was her merit in thus performing and enduring, for the sake of her loved family, the menial service required of her, and the affronts which were hourly offered her.

Mary was the eldest daughter of a lieutenant in the army; he had married young, and had a family of nine children to maintain, and his limited income would have proved altogether insufficient for the purpose, had not all his expenses been arranged with the strictest attention to economy. He was at this time abroad with his regiment in the West Indies, and had been there between three and four years, without having once returned home during that period. He had entertained so great a dread of the injurious effects that terrible climate might have on his delicate wife and young family, that he was led to prefer the painful alternative of leaving them behind in England.

Through the interest of his Colonel he had succeeded in obtaining for his two second sons admission into the Academy at Woolwich, and before he quitted the country he engaged a neat and commodious though very small house at Charlton, that the mother might be near her boys. Here he saw Mrs. Wilmot settled with her five daughters and one remaining boy, three years of age and the youngest of the family. The eldest son, who was in his eighteenth year, had at his own request entered the navy when he was little more than a child, and was shortly expecting his promotion to a lieutenancy. Having seen those who were so dear to him as well arranged and comfortable as it was in his power to make them during his absence, Mr. Wilmot took his leave of England. In the ultimate hope that Mary would be able to teach her younger sisters, or if at any future period it should become necessary for her to support herself that a good education would enable her to earn a respectable maintenance, Mrs. Wilmot, not long after her husband's departure, was induced to avail herself of the opportunities

offered at Mrs. Durett's, by which she would be enabled to obtain for her daughter the advantages of good instruction and the first masters, on the understanding that the expenses would be reduced to a mere trifle if she consented to make herself "generally useful" in the school. But had the fond mother's heart known the painful exactions required and the cutting slights to which her unrepining Mary would be hourly subjected, she would not for a single day, for the sake of any benefit to be gained there, have allowed her to remain the drudge at Forester House.

But Mary felt that this arrangement relieved her mother from much expense, and that the attainments and accomplishments which she acquired, with the assistance of such able instruction, would be a great service to her sisters, and for the sake of those she loved so dearly she bore it all in silence and without a murmur.

It was true that at home Mary had been accustomed to active exertion. Mrs. Wilmot had educated all her children to be useful; she was herself a pattern of punctuality, neatness, and industry, and had brought up her family in the same good habits. All the needle work for the household was done at home, and therefore the mother and daughters had each a portion to perform adapted to her ability. They kept but one maid servant, and hard would have been her work but for the order and good management of Mrs. Wilmot and the kindness and assistance that she met with from every member of the family. Laborious as her place might have been considered by some, she had passed seven years most happily with them, and was so much attached to all, that she said she "hoped she might never be carried from their doors but in her coffin." Thus all seemed to conspire in spite of a narrow income to make Mary's a very happy home, and made her feel the sad contrast between that and her present cheerless situation.

After Miss Percivale's offensive speech, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Harriette, who was present at the time, felt so much pity for poor Mary, and was so disgusted at the teacher's treatment of her, that she determined not to pass another day without improving the acquaintance already commenced between them. She also wished to elicit from Mary so much of her history as should

serve to explain the circumstances which could expose so gentle and unoffending a creature to the unkindness she habitually encountered. With this view Harriette joined Miss Wilmot during her daily exercise in the garden of the square, where, as usual, she was walking alone. Her first attempt at conversation would certainly have been discouraging to one less determined to persevere than Harriette, for the half-boarder replied with much reserve of manner to her companion's observations, and was apparently disinclined to be communicative.

But, by degrees, encouraged by the ingenuousness of Harriette's behaviour, she unbent towards her persevering companion. After this first attempt had succeeded, Harriette lent her books, patterns, music, and sought by many such little acts of kindness, and every delicate attention in her power, to win her to greater confidence and ease; and she was making a certain, though slow progress, towards intimacy with her new and pleasing friend, when a circumstance occurred, which in its result tended greatly towards establishing a sincere and lasting affection between them.

One morning all the school, with their teachers, were taking their daily and monotonous promenade round and round the garden of the square, and Mary and Harriette were walking together, and conversing more agreeably and sociably than they had hitherto done, when Miss Percivale and Miss Gordon met them.

"I wonder," exclaimed the former, in a tone intended to be audible to both Harriette and Mary, "I wonder that Miss Falkland should allow her cousin and *protégée*, Miss Browne, to be always with that Miss Wilmot! Miss Falkland is so perfectly genteel, she would never demean herself in that way; but this country cousin of her's is no lady, you may see plainly, by the company she keeps; her greatest intimate, indeed the only friend she seems to have made since she came to school, has been the half-boarder. 'Birds of a feather,' you know the rest, and I am sure it's quite true in this case. But I think, for her own sake, Miss Falkland ought to make her relation hold her head a little higher. I hate such low, vulgar minds."

This, as was Miss Percivale's desire, reached the ears of both Harriette and Mary. The former was very indignant; but before she had time to give utterance to her feelings,

Mary said, in a gentle tone, while the big tears started in her eyes—

"You are very good to me, Miss Browne, and I cannot tell you how grateful I feel towards you for the considerate kindness you have shown me. There never was any one in this house that came and spoke to me as you have done, and treated me so much like what I have always been accustomed to at my dear, dear home. I loved you the first morning that you ever exchanged a word with me, but you must not be so kind any longer; you see they blame you for it, and I would not for the universe that you should be made uncomfortable on my account. I must leave you. I shall still believe that you care for me, by your looks, but do not—do not take any further notice of me. I can bear it a little longer, for I am used to neglect," and she turned to go.

"What!" cried Harriette. "Stay—do you think that I am as mean as the rest of them? I wish, indeed, that I had come here sooner, for your sake; but if you avoid me for anything that odious Miss Percivale has said, I shall be quite vexed with you."

"I see you pity me, dear Miss Browne," said the poor girl, literally sobbing. "Oh! thank you—thank you!"

"No, I do not pity you, dear, I love you," said Harriette, putting her arm gently within that of Mary. "I have no patience to see you made miserable by the contemptible, unfeeling behaviour you meet with. That nasty woman is old enough to know better; it is blameable in the girls, but in her it is insufferable."

"Oh! but remember I am not like you and the others. I am here as a half-boarder."

"Yes, I do remember it; and for that very reason they should all be more kind to you—to make your situation less distressing to you. Oh! what would my dear papa say to this, if he could see it? He would say, 'that such conduct was contrary to every feeling of generosity and kindness of heart, and therefore must be very displeasing to the Most High, who in His wisdom, and for His own good purposes, exalts one to station and affluence, and depresses another in poverty and woe, without any reference to our own deserts. He is kind and pitiful, and requires us to show the same tenderness towards all our fellow-creatures which

He is ever bestowing upon us.' This is what I well recollect papa once saying. Do not think, dear Miss Wilmot, that I have any feeling of condescension in wishing to make a friendship between us, or that I shall care for the contemptible opinions of Miss Percivale and our schoolfellows. I may be behind others of my age in our studies, but I am most thankful that my dear papa gave me higher ideas of my duty."

Mary wept violently, and tried to express her gratitude, but in vain, and finding her feelings too great for control, she went from the garden into the house, and in the solitude of her room relieved herself by a copious flood of tears. These were the first she had shed for many months; scorn had no longer the power to affect her thus, but it was the unaccustomed, and therefore unexpected, kindness she had experienced from Harriette, that had drawn them forth, and therefore they brought relief to a heart overcharged with bitterness. When this fit of weeping had subsided, she felt a load removed, and an inward peace and tranquillity of spirit, which had long been a stranger to her young bosom. She had now found a friend, and a true friend—one who would sympathize in her sorrows, and share with her all her thoughts, and what a change would that produce during the remaining term of her probation at school! These were the reflections of the poor girl as she sought once more, but with lighter heart, the busy scene of mental improvement.

Harriette was now almost her constant companion during their leisure hours, and Miss Percivale and their schoolfellows, finding that their remarks had no effect in separating the two friends, gave up for a time any further observations on Miss Browne's "low tastes."

The character of Mary's disposition and talents was of a superior order; and being a year older than Harriette, their intimacy was likely to prove a great advantage to the latter. The spell which seemed hitherto to have been thrown over the half-boarder, by the unkindness she had experienced, was now removed, and she appeared in new and brighter colours. The reserved and restrained manner was exchanged for one of greater openness and freedom. She was cheerful and alert in the discharge of her degrading duties, and her readiness to oblige won greatly on the favour

of those about her, and even slightly on Miss Percivale, who, we may hope, was ashamed of her previous ill-nature. Hitherto, Mary's constant vexations had been permitted to prey on her mind, and her health had certainly been injured by this unspoken suffering. Her frame was very delicate, and there was a clear transparency of complexion, an occasional flush, and a brilliancy of the eyes, that intimated too plainly a consumptive tendency.

CHAPTER VI.

It is well known that among the many objectionable and absurd peculiarities which are incident to the character of a genuine "boarding-school miss," a romance of some kind must attach itself to her history, and this is considered as absolutely essential to her own happiness, as well as her credit among her fellow-pupils.

It would be well if the faults and the follies so generally to be met with in ladies' seminaries, existed only with the young people themselves; but there is too frequently reason to regret, that those who have the subordinate charge of their education (the teachers, we would say), instead of considering their own responsibility, and the importance of the charge committed to them—instead of watching, as they should do, over the tempers and dispositions of their pupils, and checking and correcting what is amiss as it rises into notice, by timely admonition—are, on the contrary, known to encourage, both by conversation and example, the very vanity and follies which it is their duty to eradicate.

The true object of all education—the improvement of the mind and the cultivation of the moral feelings—is either neglected or forgotten. Where, among the fair disciples of this mode of instruction, are to be found the shades and differences of character which distinguish all other human beings from each other? They are no longer visible! It is a usual remark, that "the handwriting of young ladies is all alike," and it may be said, with equal truth, that in their character and manner they all appear similar. And why is this? it may be asked. Because there is a superficial covering thrown over the heart and its dispositions.

Young ladies are to appear amiable and gentle because it is in good taste to be so, and it would be unbecoming and

unladylike for them to seem otherwise; but what instructress looks within to see and direct the feelings and the motives that are at work beneath this veil of gentility? Very few, we fear; and instead of storing her young pupil's mind with such good principles of thought and action as would be her future guide and protection, education too frequently provides her only with the flimsy painted cuirass of modern worldly policy and "good seeming" as the only shield to defend her amidst the follies, the temptations, and the sorrows to which, on her entry upon life, she must necessarily be exposed!

It is to several circumstances under which these schools are organized that the mischief resulting from this mode of education may chiefly be attributed. A lady receives into her house a larger number of young girls than she can possibly attend to properly. She may be highly competent herself, and possessed of every wish to bring them up correctly, but, in consequence of her having more than can be admitted to her drawing-room so as to have a constant watchful eye on them, they are herded together in twenties, thirties, or forties, in a schoolroom apart from the governess. A sufficient number of teachers is engaged, of whose private character or history the lady mistress knows nothing, but who are not otherwise than "respectable," so their testimonials say, and are "well grounded in French and English grammar;" and these are the persons deputed to the charge of instruction, and on whom the formation of her pupils' future characters is to depend.

These persons are engaged, in many cases, at such low salaries (frequently not exceeding that of a good cook, or a smart footman) that it would be impossible for ladies to take the situation; the occupation of governess is, therefore, both in schools and private families, much degraded from what it ought to be by the admission to this important office of persons of such mean birth and vulgar ideas as unfit them for the task. The follies, consequently, of which we are going to give a specimen, receive considerable encouragement and augmentation from the teachers themselves.

Harriette, very shortly after her residence at Forester House, found that there was one subject of almost paramount importance with her companions, and which formed the chief part of their conversation, and this was a *lover*—every

young lady having a hero of a love-tale for her own peculiar possession. All this was quite new to Harriette, and, although she never could be brought to own any particular *penchant*, or had any young gentleman to talk of, she was nevertheless obliged, out of common courtesy, to listen to a great deal of very touching and sentimental discourse from those who had.

The usual place where these interesting attachments took their rise was the church, or during their daily walks. One young gentleman was esteemed because he was handsome, another because he dressed well, a third because he used exquisite perfumes ; one was irresistible from his being thin and sentimental looking, another because he was fat and smiling ; one because he never took his eyes off his book during the service, and another because he never took his eyes off the young ladies.

This last-mentioned hero, for some time previous to Miss Browne's coming to school, had been an object of deep interest, and the cause of many unhappy disputes which took place among several of the elder girls as to which of them was most frequently honoured with his gaze. After much squabbling, it was at length determined to put an end to these quarrels and emulations and settle the important point, as to whose he was destined to be, by drawing lots for him. The lot fell on Miss Boulton, and happy was she in being able to assume to herself the entire undisputed possession of his flattering regards ; that "the thing was decided by fate" was apparent to all by this lottery, and she immediately instituted this youth as her idol.

She found out soon afterwards that he lived in one of the houses in the square. She observed also that Mrs. Durett had a bowing acquaintance with him, and the two ladies who always accompanied him to church, and whom she supposed, from their respective ages, must be his mamma and sister. He was therefore a gentleman, and she might consequently safely trust herself with the indulgence of a piece of romance, she thought.

The acquaintance gradually progressed ; from looks they came to an exchange of smiles. He then, contrary to his usual practice, came to the afternoon service, when the family might have gone for a drive in the parks. He next changed his seat from his own pew to one near that occupied

by Mrs. Durett's young ladies, and close to the end where Miss Boulton sat. He appeared to the eyes of Mrs. Durett so demure and attentive to his duty that she experienced no alarm on account of his vicinity to her pupils; but when she and the rest were engaged in their devotions, the gentleman would venture on a little conversation with Miss Boulton during the loud responses, so that unless those near to the two parties engaged in the intercourse had had some suspicion of what was going on, it would have been next to impossible to have discovered that they were not very attentively joining in the services.

At other times they would exchange *billets doux*, either by enclosing them in small bouquets of geranium or lilies, and dropping these carelessly into each other's pew, or by placing them, on other occasions, in some pre-arranged spot in the square garden. The difficulty of carrying on this correspondence without being discovered was every day becoming greater, so that Miss Boulton was obliged to draw upon her talents for intrigue, and to have recourse to her ingenuity for the sake of pursuing this affair of the heart with secrecy and success, for the gentleman became quite serious in his professions.

Miss Percivale had evinced a slight suspicion that something was going on, but she did not exactly know what, and fancied that the young man seemed to watch the operations of the establishment, and was often seen in places where he was likely to meet the school when walking out. She therefore asked several of the elder girls whether they had observed this handsome young gentleman, and "what he could be always meeting them in their walks for? and how it was that he was always at their side when they were coming out of church?" Miss Boulton, who was of the number met together to be consulted on this subject, smiled at Miss Percivale, gave her a sly look, and, putting her finger to her lips, intimated to her not to speak further on the subject just then; but that she had something to tell her when they were alone.

Miss Percivale had been very pretty, but her first bloom was past, and at seven-and-twenty her countenance, which must always have been mean in its form and character, had now the expression of a soured haughty temper, which made her anything but pleasing generally, although, when she

was in a particularly amiable mood and disposed to please, her smile was very sweet, and her air altogether rather interesting. Miss Percivale had, among her many other shining qualities, a very considerable degree of personal vanity, and a great fondness for talking of the vast number of offers and admirers she had had; and she also stated that these poor rejected suitors had retired into remote corners of the country, where they still were languishing under the direful effects of her frowns and scorn.

Miss Boulton, with the rest of her companions, were fully aware of this weakness on the part of their instructress, and she therefore, with a ready wit, determined to take advantage of her folly, and turn it to her own benefit and that of her lover. Miss Percivale, full of anxiety and curiosity to hear what her young friend and pupil had to communicate, soon found an opportunity of listening to what she had to tell, and, after the lessons were ended for the day, she desired Miss Boulton to come with her; and they retired together to the music room.

"Now, my love," began Miss Percivale, after the door was closed, "what was it you had to tell me this morning? I suppose it is not anything very unpleasant from your manner. It was about that young man."

"Yes, but I hope you will not be displeased with me, ma'am, for telling you, but that gentleman you spoke of is Mr. Alfred Sutton. He is a cousin of mine, ma'am, and a friend of our family. He has never been to see me here, nor do we take any notice, you see, of each other, like cousins, because Mrs. Durett is so very particular, and she told mamma, the day I came to school, that she did not like having the brothers and cousins of her pupils visiting here because of the other young ladies, lest they might, as a gentleman once said, 'like other men's sisters better than their own.' He is rather handsome, do you not think so, Miss Percivale?"

"Oh yes, my dear, certainly—decidedly handsome; but go on, you have something more to say, I guess, by your wicked looks."

"But now, ma'am, I do not know whether I may venture to tell you all, lest you should be angry with me for the liberty I take; but Alfred admires you, ma'am, very much,

and thinks you handsomer a great deal than all of us put together."

"Pshaw! nonsense, child; why, I know you don't mean it; you are only intending to quiz me, and if so you know I shall be very angry. What, did he tell you so himself? He, he, he! Lah! child, how very ridiculous; do tell me what you mean by such nonsense."

"Why, that Alfred admires you very much, and told me so, and he would like to be introduced to you, but he does not know how it could be managed."

"Well, my dear, if this is really true," said Miss Percivale, changing her simpering, delighted manner, to one of more condescending kindness and reserve, "well, I should not object to being introduced, of course, to any friend of yours that wished it; but it seems very odd that he should fancy me so, only from seeing me out a few times; but, to be sure, I have always been used to this sort of attention, so it does not surprise me much. But I don't see how an introduction can take place as he does not come here."

"Oh! if you would give me leave, and would not object to my plan, I think I know how it might be done. I would then write him a little note, and if you and I were out together anywhere he might join us in our walk; and then, if you allowed me to introduce him to you, he would be so delighted, for he says that he can see by your looks that you must be very amusing in conversation."

This answered its purpose fully. Miss Percivale said she would ask permission to go out shopping, and to be allowed to take Miss Boulton with her for an hour or two, and that when she could fix the time Emma should write to her cousin and tell him that he might join them, and that Miss Percivale would get the note conveyed to Mr. Sutton as soon as it was ready.

This treacherous deceiver, exulting in the admirable success of her scheme so far, and being told by her dupe the hour she had fixed on for getting out the following day, took an early opportunity of writing the subjoined letter to her lover.

"MY DEAR ALFRED—You have encouraged and urged me to the use of this tender epithet, and, while I shrink from writing the words *dear Alfred* (how shockingly familiar

it looks !), I feel that, as you say in your last billet, that you are 'by me greatly beloved.' How romantic and interesting our attachment is ! and how greatly papa and mamma would be astonished at it ; but that is the best part of it, I always loved a secret, and above all to astonish them. You ask if they will be angry. No, I should think not ; they would not wish, and have no right, to control their children's feelings when it interferes with their happiness ; and if they did I do not believe I should care, while I am assured of your love, which to me is worth all their's put together. There would be something spirited in showing them the depth of my love for you, in spite of them and their interested views. I hope you agree with me. Papa is sure to come round when what you planned in your last dear letter is all over.

" Miss Percivale, who is our head teacher, will help us on beautifully, I think. You will be surprised to hear that she has remarked (she is so very sharp I am quite afraid of her) and has had some sort of suspicion about you. I therefore determined, and I think you will say very cleverly, to have some fun with her, and by this means keep ourselves out of any scrape which I think must otherwise have happened. I told her that you were my cousin, and that you admired her very much, and wished to be introduced to her very much. She is a hideous old fright, and somewhat vixenish ; but never mind that, for if you make love to her properly she will give us many pleasant walks together. She bids me now write and tell you that to-morrow we shall be at the confectioner's in — Street, at half past two ; that we are then going shopping, but desires me not to tell you that this is her doing, or even done with her knowledge, so you must meet 'your cousin' accidentally. Now, pray do not forget that. I shall then be able to procure you the delightful gratification of an introduction to this disagreeable and odious creature. I hope you will not think that I have done wrong in this little manœuvre. It is only done for the sake of a little fun, and pray try to play your part well towards her, and then we shall do famously.

" I cannot answer you yet about the plan you proposed yesterday. I think it would be very dashing and romantic, yet I must think about it ; for, though you know I love you truly (your kindness has encouraged me to this bold-

ness), it is still a step that requires a little reflection, and I have not yet made up my mind. But trust me, I shall not consult any one person nor thing but my own feelings, which you praise as generous. Adieu, dearest Alfred—*au revoir*—and subscribe myself, as I ever hope to be,

“Your faithfully attached,

“EMMA BOULTON.”

Mr. Sutton's reply evinced the deep feeling and poetic taste of a truly generous and refined mind, and ran thus :

“MY DEAREST LIFE—I will be at the place you appoint punctually. Blame you? no, I feel hourly, and particularly by this last evidence of your talent, that your personal beauties, which first attracted my admiration, are only equalled by the incomparable superiorities of your mind, thus rendering lasting and carrying to the heart those feelings which hitherto claimed only my admiration. Joy of my life, adieu, and if it should ever be that the sun of thy smile ceases to shine on your Alfred, and I do not die! Oh, may the victim of your frowns be poisoned, or drowned, rather than let me languish on, dragging a dreary existence through years of cloud and misery, unsunned and unenlightened by the only orbs within the narrow hemisphere of my thoughts, the beaming kind regards of those eyes which now alone have power to give vitality and cheerfulness to his entity.

“Tell me precisely, dearest, in your next most precious billet, what your expectations are; I hear they are very considerable. I trust this ain't true, for I would not for the universe (for I am a man of high spirit) that any one should think that pecuniary matters have in any degree attracted me to my charming Emma. I do not fear my Emma's thinking so basely of me, she is far too noble ever to dream of these sublunary things, and she cannot doubt a love which, anxious only for the possession of her, far above all value as you are, has, up to the present moment, never even referred to the word money. I hope, my Emma, who does not appear blind to my most trifling merits, will duly value this delicacy of conduct on my part. My love, my peerless love, excuse my now naming it, but it is become necessary that we should now no longer have any secrets from each

other. Adieu once more, dearest. How shall I count the hours and the minutes until the time comes to-morrow which is to give us both such happiness! How difficult will be the task of paying attention to your uninteresting Miss P. whilst my Emma is at my side! Still I continue to write, because it is the only gratification I can know out of your presence. Farewell! I must conclude, and

“I am ever most devotedly, faithfully, and disinterestedly,

“Your friend and lover,


“ALFRED SUTTON.”

Before Mr. Sutton had suffered his partiality for Miss Boulton to arise to such a height of enthusiasm (for their acquaintance had commenced many months previous to the present state of affairs) he had, by dint of inquiry, obtained the agreeable intelligence that the young lady who had so much encouraged his notice at church was possessed of a considerable fortune independent of her parents; that she was an only child, and her father living in great affluence; and that unless his clandestine marriage with Emma, which he now seriously meditated, should so far displease Mr. Boulton as to induce him to make a will in favour of another, she must also be heiress to his wealth.

This appeared a very pretty prospect to Mr. Sutton, and if the thing was well managed doubtless the parental heart must pardon and overlook the fault. It was a great temptation, and meeting with no discouragement from the young lady herself, Mr. Sutton had proceeded to the daring length of proposing to Emma an elopement from school.

The day following the inditing of these two most deeply interesting letters, the meeting and introduction at the confectioner's took place, after which the trio had a very agreeable walk into the Regent's Park. Miss Percivale, who had for this notable occasion decked herself in her best attire and her sweetest smiles, was well repaid for her efforts by the assiduities of the agreeable Mr. Sutton, and was highly delighted with their promenade.

Mr. Sutton performed his part to admiration: and, while plying Miss Percivale with attentions and compliments, discoursed to Emma occasionally so cunningly of their relations and family matters, that, bit by bit, he elicited all he wished to know respecting herself, and particularly with



regard to the money. For at the door of a shop, whilst Miss Percivale was within engaged in the purchase of a pair of gloves, he ascertained that Miss Boulton really had property of her own to the amount of fifteen thousand pounds, left to her by her maternal grandmother; a piece of information which put him in remarkably high spirits; and assured of this his mind was quite at ease.

They had several of these pleasant meetings, and were equally satisfied with their respective shares in the game. Miss Percivale always made a point of taking Emma with her, for the sake of appearance, and being herself perfectly absorbed by the admiration she thought she had excited in a handsome young man of apparently such good condition, never once dreamed that a little "chit" of seventeen could possibly be playing an under plot with her own particular beau against herself. Mr. Sutton raised himself considerably each time they met in the eyes of the teacher by his seeming intimate acquaintance with many of the aristocracy, and by the familiar manner in which he spoke of Portland, Buccleugh, and others; but above all by the dazzling splendour of his brocaded waistcoats and cravats, which exceeded all the beetles in the kingdom in the brilliancy of the shots and the blending of the colours; and by his gold and enamelled pins, rings, and studs, with which he endeavoured to set off and adorn his beautiful person.

The period of the first assignation was just before Mary came to Forester House; but after Miss Boulton had by lot engaged to herself the right of Mr. Sutton's attentions the other young ladies ceased to notice him, and were totally ignorant of the lengths to which their companion had suffered this flirtation to carry her.

CHAPTER VII.

The terms on which Harriette still remained with Miss Falkland—for since the affair of the camellia they had scarcely exchanged a word—made her very uneasy. It is true that she had lost all respect for Eliza, and much of her affection had waned with it, yet still they were near relations, and the kindness which Harriette had experienced from her cousin, on first coming among strangers, could not all at once be forgotten. No other circumstance than that of seeing a little girl who was wholly inoffensive, treated with injustice, could have induced Harriette to have done anything to cause annoyance to her quondam protectress and friend. She felt, however, that she had acted rightly—that is, as she knew her father would have approved, could he have witnessed it—she could not therefore apologise, and yet she wished for a reconciliation. Harriette sought frequent occasions for effecting this. She endeavoured to enter into conversation with Eliza, and by a constantly obliging course of conduct to regain her good will, but every attempt proved equally abortive.

It may be worthy of remark, that there is never any acknowledged animosity among girls, or any open warfare, such as exists in boys' schools, where, when they are angered, or are ill-used, they bestow liberally on each other a few amiable and well-chosen epithets, and, with the addition of a few hard thumps, succeed in relieving themselves of their superfluity of irascible fluid, and are good friends again as soon as the scuffle is over. But here any little feeling of resentment ferments silently, and lasts a very considerable time.

With school girls all is seeming smile and sunshine, and they will look sweetly on their adversary while they are in

cold blood, stabbing her with taunts and jeers, and cutting her small portion of self-love into mince-meat, and then intersperse the whole discourse with several *mes chères* or my dears, giving this epithet a peculiar warmth proportioned to the altitude of their spite at the time. So that *ma chère* not unfrequently is equivalent, in the terse language of the classical student, to..... most shocking words.

On one occasion a young lady, who was all candour and honesty herself, finding that she was exposed at school to this species of warfare, was greatly delighted one day, after having given some trifling cause of offence to one of her companions, on being called in return, with some vehemence, a "grande nasty bête." Indeed, her ecstasy ran so high at hearing so open a confession of feeling, and in meeting with a spirit so congenial with her own, that she folded her in her arms, and declared that she should be the only friend she would select among all her schoolfellows.

The coolness between Eliza and Harriette had continued for more than a month, when one morning while the latter was occupied in threading some beads, which before their alienation her cousin had asked her to sort for her, Eliza came to the part of the table at which she was seated, and after the usual preliminary of a kiss, which infinitely surprised our little friend, said—"My dear Harriette, let us be friends again. I am sure that I am not angry with you."

This was not precisely the kind of address which Harriette thought suited to their relative positions, neither had she expected or wished it to be thus, for she might have objected to the notion of forgiveness when she was not the party who had acted wrong; but still too good an opportunity was offered for a return of sociability, to allow the good-natured girl to hesitate a moment about acceding to the terms of peace that were offered. She therefore told Eliza that she was very glad to be friends with her again, and having returned the kiss with interest, they were once more established in amity, and, to all external appearance, as fond of each other as at first.

Eliza was one of those enviable beings who have no hearts, or whose morbid affections, if they have any, are never exercised in their friendships, and therefore she could throw off or recal, a friend, as caprice, temper, or con-

venience might dictate. But she usually pursued the safer mode, of smiling on all alike, because it was more interesting to others, and more pleasant to herself. She therefore felt towards Harriette as she had done before; but the latter, on the contrary, was wounded and disappointed at finding that her cousin, with so much that she could and had already begun to love, was unworthy of her esteem.

This might have led her to look with some degree of distrust on all the rest of her companions; and, contrary to the just requirements of the law which bids us to "consider every man honest, until we can prove him otherwise," she might have been taught, as many others have been, by frequent, sad experience, the lesson of worldly policy, which leads us to suspect everyone until we have tried and found him trustworthy.

The reunion of the cousins had a very desirable influence on the opinions of all Eliza's champions in favour of Harriette, and gradually the dislike and reserve that had been before too evident, began to wear away, and she was now frequently joined in her walks by some young lady who, either from good-fellowship, kindness, or curiosity, entered into conversation with her. The subjects usually chosen, however, were not such as were calculated to afford Harriette much gratification, as they consisted chiefly of interrogations relative to her father's death and her mother's present circumstances, or in comparisons as to their respective style, fortune, fashion, or beauty, which were only made the subject of discourse when the speaker was well assured that the superiority was entirely on her side.

Eliza Falkland was still very kind and gracious in her manner to her cousin, and all the little attentions and favours were renewed which had, on her first coming to school, given Harriette so much pleasure, and so much cause for gratitude.

In one of their conversations, however, Miss Falkland introduced and urged on Harriette's attention a subject which, had they not both been rendered cautious by their recent estrangement, might have led to a second rupture, which perhaps had not been so easily healed as on the first occasion.

"My dear Harriette," she said, "I suppose you do not know, and therefore I think it kind to tell you, that Miss

Percivale and all the young ladies in the house are remarking on your extraordinary intimacy with Miss Wilmot. She is, you know, little better than a servant, and it is never done here—no one associates with the half-boarders; and although I dare say you mean it good-naturedly, yet you must, if you wish to be on good terms with us, give up such idle, romantic nonsense, and consider first your own respectability and standing with those of our station. I shall not be here much longer, therefore you cannot think that I am interested in what I say, which is entirely, dear, for your own sake. Recollect, also, that you are forming a friendship which you cannot possibly keep up after you leave school. Could you speak to, or shake hands with Miss Wilmot in the street, or in the Parks, when you are with our fashionable relations and friends? No, you know it is impossible. Or could you suffer her to visit at your mamma's house, or could you go to her parents' residence, who live in some out-of-the-way vulgar place, far from the fashionable world, somewhere near Greenwich, I believe!

“Now you see, instead of doing her a kindness, you will be giving her more pain by and by, when you must cut her, than you can possibly atone for by any pleasure you afford her now. Therefore, my dear child, do give up this foolish pretence of generosity, as I suppose you fancy it, and associate only with those young ladies who, from birth or fortune, will be useful and creditable connexions for you in after life. That is what mamma always told me to do: to ‘strengthen and increase your acquaintance with the highest society you are thrown among, and this cannot be done better than by intimacies at school, where you may form strong and disinterested attachments.’ You have lived all your days in the country, dear, so that you cannot know what is necessary or right to be done by those who are well connected, and wish to live in the first circles of the *beau monde*.”

Harriette assured her cousin, who had never before in her life attempted so much of argument, or perpetrated such a long and eloquent oration, that there was “no one in the school that she liked as she did her friend Mary; that she was amiable, affectionate, cultivated, and ladylike; and that although her family might not be rich, yet her being the daughter of a gentleman and an officer, she could

never possibly be ashamed of acknowledging her acquaintance in any society.

"Oh, Harriette, what nonsense! that cannot be the case; a gentleman and an officer!" said Miss Falkland. "Do you think that, if her father was a gentleman, she would not have boasted of that before now. But, at any rate, they are not in society, and she is a half-boarder. I do not wish, Harriette, to quarrel with you again. I have spoken kindly, and I think very sensibly, and I shall be greatly vexed if you do not take my advice. Now, pray, dear, give her up, and do not let Miss Percivale and the other ladies have reason to remark on your familiarity with a person who is so beneath you; at least, beneath some of your relations; and this intimacy is certainly a discredit to us both."

This discussion of Eliza's annoyed Harriette very much, and she felt extremely vexed that what she had done out of good nature had excited, among the teachers and her fellow-pupils such invidious remarks. There was, perhaps, a slight struggle with her feelings of self, but it did not last beyond a moment, and she determined on remaining constant to her amiable friend, who so much needed her kindness, and was so grateful to her for the little she had it in her power to show. She, therefore, told her cousin that she could not change her behaviour towards Miss Wilmot; and although she was very much obliged to Eliza for what she intended well, yet she begged her not to say anything more to her about it.

Eliza was exceedingly disappointed at her ill success with her obstinate self-opiniated relation, and concluded by telling her that Miss Percivale said she was "greatly amused at the airs she had seen in Miss Wilmot, since Harriette's notice had made her fancy herself a lady, and that, if it did not stop soon, she would take care to keep her back enough," and that what perhaps Harriette intended in kindness would only expose her friend to more illnature from Miss Percivale, who had it in her power to make anyone very uncomfortable who displeased her.

Although Harriette was yet too young to have attained to that greatness of mind which renders us in a good cause indifferent to the opinions or the taunts of others, yet she determined to stand firm in what she knew to be right, and

to struggle on against the illnature or the difficulties that she might meet with. With so fair a beginning we may have reason to hope that she would at length rank among those enviable persons who, in the conscious rectitude and integrity of their principles, pursue "the even tenor of their way," showing themselves either superior or invulnerable to the petty shafts of malice or of censure, which are too often levelled at them by those who, blind to the importance of trifling defects, deem it either unnecessary or unbecoming to be more precise than their neighbours.

The two friends, therefore, went on as usual; but, after this unsuccessful conference, Miss Percivale, who had been the originator of this amiable lecture, was evidently less favourably disposed towards her slave than ever. She occupied her more upstairs, and gave her considerably more needlework to do. This answered two purposes: it punished Mary for being more free and happy, which Miss Percivale would have called less "deferential and subservient," by keeping her constantly employed on those duties which must remind her of her subordinate situation; and by thus separating her from Harriette she also punished that self-willed young lady, who, in opposition to the high authority and opinion of the head-teacher, (to which all were taught to bend) could not be turned either by remonstrance or taunts from her praiseworthy determination of befriending and associating with the half-boarder.

Miss Percivale, whose duty it was to perform some share of the needlework, now left it all to her *aide-de-camp*; she was perhaps herself employed in anticipating her nuptials, and preparing her wedding wardrobe; but Mary had by this arrangement so much more to do than usual, that she had been obliged to neglect some of her ordinary studies, and was in consequence very much behindhand with the French and Italian masters. Harriette, therefore, lent all the assistance in her power. In her leisure hours she learnt Mary's tasks (although they did not happen to be in the same books as used in Harriette's class), in order that she might teach them to her *vivâ voce*, during their walks; besides which she also worked very indefatigably with her fingers, at the apparently insurmountable basket of stockings, the mending of which was the hebdomadal odious task of the half-boarder.

This did very well for some time, and it was not discovered by the lynx-eyed Miss Percivale, until one morning, when an incident occurred which brought it to her notice.

It happened that, on one very fine day in the autumn, the teachers and the young ladies were going to take a walk as far as the Regent's Park,—this was a treat which occurred but rarely, as their promenades were usually confined to the precincts of the square. Miss Percivale did not forget that Miss Wilmot would have enjoyed this equally with the rest of her school-fellows, but she told Mary that she should not allow her to go with them that morning, for that she must stay at home, and finish mending and overlooking the clothes. Mary was vexed, but Harriette was quite angered at this piece of gratuitous illnature; she, therefore, in spite of all remonstrance from Mary, expressed her firm determination to remain at home with her, and help her in getting through her disagreeable task; after which they would attack the French and Italian, and make up Mary's arrears of *thèmes* with her two instructors.

It never occurred to Harriette to ask leave to remain behind, or that any one could be displeased at her doing so without permission. She was not in sight when the party started, or Miss Percivale would have noticed that she was not in her walking attire, and taught her that young ladies at school are not suffered to do what they like. Whether she was thinking of Mr. Alfred Sutton, or whispering to Miss Boulton "that perhaps they might meet him," is not known, but certain it is that Miss Percivale never missed her pupil until they had reached the park gates. She then inquired where Miss Browne was, and was told that she had not come out with them.

It would be difficult to describe the countenance of the enraged teacher, or to paint the feelings expressed thereon, on being informed that Harriette had not accompanied them. She felt assured that she had given up her walk on Mary's account. Miss Percivale's conscience also told her that her unkindness towards Miss Wilmot, on this as on every other occasion, had been perfectly uncalled for, and without excuse, for the poor girl had never in a single instance done anything to provoke such treatment. She, therefore, saw in Harriette's conduct her resolution to stand by her friend, and that to mitigate the hardship of being

deprived of her exercise on a fine day, she had stayed at home to share it with her.

All this Miss Percivale felt convinced was done only to reprimand her for her unjustifiable severity, and to show contempt of her superior authority as head-teacher. Pride, hatred, and revenge were reigning alternately in her bosom during the rest of the promenade, and by the time they returned to Forester House she had succeeded in arranging to her satisfaction the course of conduct she intended to adopt towards both these innocent offenders. She found the two friends in the school-room, as happy as they could be, the work was all finished and put away, the exercises were written out, and they were employed when she entered in practising a duet on the piano.

"Pray, Miss Browne, what do you stay at home for without leave from me, when the rest of the ladies are out?" screamed Miss Percivale, in her loudest tone. "You are always with your friend the half-boarder, forsooth! I am perfectly ashamed of you, when there are plenty of companions suited to you, but I will take care that it shall not go on so; and you to dare to do as you please without asking my permission! You will learn four French psalms, those for the day; and if they are not said before the bell rings for tea you shall stand then at the side table; and if they are not ready for me before the evening prayers you stand in disgrace during all the meals to-morrow, and I hope Mrs. Durett will see you. You! daring to act, indeed, contrary to what you know I require!"

"I did not know, ma'am, that"

"Hold your tongue this moment, Miss Browne, I'll not be answered. I know what you mean better than you do—and pray, Miss Wilmot, what have you been doing? tell me no falsehood, if you please, for I'll find you out if you do. Where is the work, pray, I left you to finish?"

Poor Mary, who had been trembling with terror at this outbreak, and willing to justify her friend's motive for staying at home, incautiously replied, "That the work was all done, and put away, and that Miss Browne had kindly stayed at home to help her, as she was behindhand with her Italian and French exercises."

"Stayed to help you, did she? When I set you a task

I expect you to do it, and not to be asking for assistance, indeed ! and pray are the exercises done ?”

“ Yes, ma'am.”

“ How many ?”

“ Six, ma'am ; I was three weeks behind the rest.”

“ Bring them here, then.”

The books lay on the table near her, and Mary handed them to Miss Percivale, who looked at the beautifully-written pages for a moment, and then with a glare of exultation, and deliberately tearing out all that had the appearance of being recently done, stripped them into twenty pieces, and threw them in Mary's face, saying—

“ There now, see what you get by the assistance of your dear friend. You may do them again, or leave them undone, for anything I care. I suppose, Miss Browne, you will be very happy to stay at home another time, in defiance of me, to help your *protegee* ? You, Miss Wilmot, will learn the same lesson as Miss Browne, and be in disgrace, both of you, until it is said, and you shall not be together, nor exchange a syllable, until I give you leave.”

The girls looked at each other, and Mary, in her gentleness, was so hurt at this return for Harriette's kindness, that the tears started in her eyes as she turned towards her. She longed to speak to her, as soon as Miss Percivale had quitted the apartment, which she did shortly after, but they only exchanged a wistful glance or two, and set themselves at once diligently to learn the lesson before tea-time, so as to avoid the disgrace of being put in the corner in the presence of all their schoolfellows.

It was a difficult thing to attempt, but by dint of exertion, they committed to memory one hundred and forty verses within two hours ; and an hour before the bell rang for tea, both Mary and Harriette went up to repeat the task.

Miss Percivale heard them through separately without prompting a single word, and the lesson was said perfectly by them both. But to their surprise, and in opposition to every idea of justice, Miss Percivale, when they had concluded, said—

“ This is all very well, young ladies ; but I see that I did not set you a lesson as long as I intended it should be. I fully meant to keep you in punishment at any rate this

evening, and you have learnt it too easily; therefore, go and learn the next psalm, and you shall not sit down until it is said; and not to-night, if I can help it," she added, in an under tone; "I think I'll manage you this time."

The girls encouraged each other, and set to work again immediately, with the hope of mastering this additional imposition, and just before the first bell rang they took up this also, and repeated it without missing a word.

Miss Percivale looked angry and vexed, but could find no fault with the manner in which it had been said, and biting her lips all the time, when it was finished, exclaimed—

"Very well; you have said the lessons I set you, I cannot help that; but, nevertheless, you shall stand at your tea, I am determined, so you may go in and take your places at the side-table before the other young ladies come in."

Harriette's spirit rose at this so far as to master all her prudence, and glancing a look of anger and scorn at Miss Percivale for her contemptible conduct, she exclaimed—

"I shall not bear this without telling Mrs. Durett the whole, and if this is to be permitted, I shall beg mamma not to let me remain here. Mary, do not cry; it is chiefly on your....." She stopped short, for otherwise she might have exposed her friend to more ill-usage, and they walked together to the side table.

This little "flash in the pan" of Harriette's extorted no remark from Miss Percivale; indeed she never noticed such sallies with severity, because she "liked girls with spirit," she said; for not being really equal to contend with them, she felt it the safer plan to make them her allies, and only persecuted those who were of a gentle and forbearing temper.

The peculiar meekness of Mary's character formed a strong contrast to the quick temper and high spirit of her friend; Harriette was of a generous, open disposition, and warm in her attachments, and being very sensitive, she was soon excited to emotions of pleasure or anger.

We not unfrequently meet with those, whose dispositions, otherwise noble, suffer themselves too much to be guided by impulse; and who, because they know these feelings to be based on what is good, fancy they cannot lead them astray, and who in a hurry to justify themselves from any unmerited imputation, or in a praiseworthy readiness to support the

cause of the injured, place themselves or their friends in disadvantageous positions, which with a little more caution and reflection might have been avoided, and their purpose have been better served. Harriette was, perhaps, a little inclined towards this defect, and the calm, thoughtful gentleness of Mary was therefore a great advantage to her, and one which she had the good sense to wish to imitate.

CHAPTER VIII.

Harriette had now been at school for three months, and had received neither message, letter, or any information from T—— Street. She had during this time asked Miss Percivale whether she might write, as she was anxious to hear something from her mother; but she was told that the young ladies were never permitted to do so, excepting once during the half year, for the purpose of announcing the approaching vacations, and when their friends were living at a great distance, or the young ladies wanted either pocket-money or clothes, and that if such was not her case, she must wait till the order was given for writing home.

Before the epistolizing week arrived, Miss Percivale one day entered the school-room with an open letter in her hand, which she was reading as she walked up the apartment. She glanced once or twice at Harriette, who observed her smile superciliously as she continued the perusal of its contents, when having finished it, she raised her voice to its usual discordant pitch, and said—

“Miss Browne, come here; here’s a letter for you from your *dear* mamma; here, take it, it’s very fine, certainly, and of course *she* thinks you all perfection.”

Harriette was cut to the heart by this unfeeling sneer, and took the treasure from the hands of the odious Miss Percivale. It was a sweet letter, written with all the kindness of a mother’s heart for her darling child, and our little Harriette would have been the last to discover what there was in it that could excite a contemptuous smile, and she felt doubly hurt that a person of Miss Percivale’s coarseness of feeling should have read the expressions of tenderness which, as she could not possibly understand or appreciate them, she had therefore treated with ridicule.

She read it over and over again, until she could almost have repeated it by heart, and was very anxious to answer it immediately; but on applying again to Miss Percivale, she was told, that "in a fortnight all would be writing home, and it would be time enough then to say what she had to say in reply to her mother's letter, as there was nothing particular in it."

The fortnight elapsed, and the orders were issued for writing to announce the vacation, and Harriette was engaged in the pleasant task of inditing a long letter to her mamma, when Mary came to her, and seeing how she was employed, told her that "it was not allowed, and advised her to burn what she had already written, unless she wished Miss Percivale or any one else to read it."

"You must make a rough copy on a slate or piece of paper, and then show it up to be overlooked and corrected; and if there is anything more added than the usual form, Miss Percivale will erase it; and lastly, it will have to be written out fair, under the superintendence of the writing-master. There must not be more than six or seven lines, or you will be obliged to put it by for your next lesson, as it will take full two hours to do it properly, for Mr. Plume is very particular."

Mary therefore, at Harriette's request, wrote for her the following letter, on the blank leaf of an exercise book—this was the only species of epistolatory composition in use at that time at Forester House:—

"Forester House, December 4, 18—.

"MY DEAR MAMMA—I am very happy in being able to inform you that the vacation commences on the eighteenth of this month, when I hope to find you and my brother Edward in good health. We re-assemble on the thirty-first of January. I regret to say that Mrs. Durett has been suffering from a slight cold, but you will rejoice to hear that she is now quite well. She is most kind to me, and I am very comfortable and happy. Mrs. Durett desires me to present her kind compliments. Pray give my love to my brother.

"I remain, my dear mamma,

"Your dutiful and affectionate daughter,

"HARRIETTE BROWNE."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Harriette, as soon as Mary had concluded this artless effusion of filial affection. "My dear girl, you do not suppose that I am going to write such formal stuff to my dear mamma. I want to talk to her about myself, and how happy I am at the prospect of being with her once more. I cannot, will not, send such a thing; it will break her heart, if she should fancy that I do not love her and Edward as I used to do! If I must not write in any other style than that, I will not write at all."

"My dear impetuous friend," replied Mary, "it will not be left to your choice whether you write or not; orders are given here and must be obeyed; it is very annoying not to be able to open our hearts to our mammas, and I do not think it a regulation that is at all necessary, but we must submit to the constituted authorities, and comfort ourselves that it is only one short fortnight ere we shall be each at home with those we love. Oh, I shall be so very happy for six weeks! and then it will come over again, but I must not think of it or I shall not be able to enjoy my holiday; indeed it is a bitter day for me when I turn from those who are so affectionate and kind to me and come to this cheerless place; but I shall never feel again as I have done, dearest Harriette, I owe you a great deal more than I can ever repay, and more than you will ever understand, for I hope you never may be situated among numbers with whom you cannot exchange one word of kindness or sympathy."

Harriette answered this by putting her arm gently on Mary's shoulder and bestowing on her a kiss; it was not like a school kiss, but one that told her friend all that her kind heart would have spoken, if the tears, which started into her eyes, had not proved the inability of her lips to give utterance to her feelings in any other form.

The letter was written, as Mary had directed, met with no erasures or additions from the governess, and was consigned to the care of the postman; and we cannot say which was the most disappointed, the mother or daughter, at this cold and formal style of correspondence; but the vacation was near at hand when there would no longer be any reserve and they would be quite happy. The writing certainly bore a near resemblance to copper plate, and Edward, in his admiration and affection for his sister, thought it ought to

hang in the drawing-room, in a handsome frame, as a perpetual monument of her skill.

We have omitted to mention until now that Madame La Rue had quitted Forester House at the termination of the first quarter, in consequence of a quarrel between herself and Miss Percivale. This arose from the latter having beaten Fanchon and thrown a large dictionary at her, as a punishment for disorderly conduct; for the little dog had been found helping herself freely out of a large dish of Irish stew which was placed on the table for dinner, at the head teacher's particular request, as she had confessed a strong partiality for onions.

The situation vacated by Madame La Rue was now filled by Mademoiselle Clarisse, a very pretty young French lady, of much greater refinement than any other teacher in the establishment. She was very reserved, and took no very active part in anything that occurred; but with an arch look or a bright smile she succeeded in showing her approbation or dislike of what was going on. Indeed, Miss Percivale was more in awe of this silent rebuke, which her conduct not unfrequently provoked, than she had ever been known to evince under any other species of control.

The happy morning at length arrived; many carriages had already beep at the door, and all the young ladies, with their wardrobes packed up, were awaiting the announcement of their friends' arrival to fetch them. Harriette had offered in her mother's name to take Mary to any part of London to meet the Woolwich coach, for she had received no answer from Mrs. Wilmot, and she did not know what to do. However, while they were talking over several plans of proceeding, Mrs. Wilmot arrived, and Mary was desired to get ready as quickly as she could, and join her mamma in the music room; for Miss Percivale would not hear of her leaving until the young ladies were all gone and everything done, and herself ready to depart, although she knew perfectly well that she had no further need of Mary's services, and most likely they would not all be off for a couple of hours. Miss Wilmot, however, was permitted to go and tell her mother that she could not leave the house for some time, and Mrs. Wilmot therefore took a book and determined to await patiently until her daughter was at liberty to attend her.

"Miss Browne's hackney coach is come," cried Miss Percivale, in a loud voice, as she entered the schoolroom, and with such a marked emphasis on the word hackney that all the young ladies present burst into a simultaneous titter, and then, looking from their funny preceptress to Harriette and back again, exclaimed, altogether—

"La ! Miss Percivale, how droll you are !"

And Miss Percivale, charmed and gratified by the success of her vulgarity, laughed aloud.

"Oh, fie donc, Miss Percivale," whispered Mademoiselle, "que c'est de mauvaise humeur de lui maltraiter comme ceci, regardez la pauvre enfant, ses yeux se remplissent de larmes ; c'est bien mal de votre parte," and crossing the room, and gently and kindly taking Harriette's arm within her own, said—"Allons, allons vite, ma chère petite. Ah ! que tu dois être heureuse d'aller voir votre chère maman. Ah ! que je puisse encore une fois embrasser la mienne ! mais hélas, je ne la verrai plus. Mettez apars vos livres et venez, venez vite on ne veut pas vous attendre, j'irai vous habiller allons," and they quitted the apartment together.

Harriette was quickly dressed, thanked Mademoiselle very warmly for her kindness, bid her adieu, and went to seek her mother in the drawing-room. There she found her, and having taken a hasty leave of Mrs. Durett, they descended to the carriage without Harriette having an opportunity of seeing Mary, or presenting her to Mrs. Browne as she had wished.

It may be worthy of notice that the coach was not a hackney-coach, but what we believe was termed a glass coach. Edward's bright, happy face presented itself from the inside when Harriette appeared, so that it is doubtful whether she was aware of a fact so important in the eyes of her school-fellows and their worthy teacher.

Nothing could exceed the happiness or rather the quiet enjoyment of this united trio. Harriette, for the first week, occupied herself almost incessantly in talking up the four months' arrears of gossip ; and which, like Baron Munchausen's frozen horn, now came out in a volley, as fast as it could escape her lips, while her mamma and Edward did their part of listeners with attention, and apparently great satisfaction. She displayed her progress in her various studies, particularly in her music, and told of all that had

passed at school. When she mentioned the situation of poor Miss Wilmot, and Mrs. Browne had drawn from the reluctant lips of her daughter so much as to ascertain the generous part she had acted towards the unfortunate half-boarder, she pressed her to her heart, and calling her "her dear father's own child," encouraged her ever to act in the same kind and disinterested manner she had now done. The mother wiped away the tear which this little instance, evincing the excellence of her Harriette's disposition, had brought into her eyes.

The first fortnight of the vacation was passed without their having had any variety suited to them, beyond a walk every day with their mamma into the different parks, the gayest streets, or the bazaars, and an occasional morning visit in Portman Square.

Mrs. Browne did not yet enter into any kind of society, nor was she equal, even had she been so disposed, to the task of accompanying her children on sight-seeing expeditions, and they were not acquainted with any young people with whom they could associate. At length Lady Falkland, who was very good natured, and fond of the office of chaperon, pitying her nephew and niece for the dull holidays which she fancied they were likely to spend "with a mamma who could not take them out," very kindly engaged to lionize them to all the shows which were best worth seeing, and, on one occasion, invited Harriette and Edward to go with her to a juvenile ball, at a friend's house, which they enjoyed from its novelty. We need give no account of this entertainment, for instead of being a simple amusement, calculated to suit the unsophisticated tastes of young people, children now only resemble the burlesque fantocini of adult life—epitomes of their papas and mammas—while their *fêtes* are tinged with the vices of later years, where vanity, affectation, coquetry, emulation, envy, and ambition, are already taking possession of their young hearts.

Yet in this company the Brownes made acquaintance with a young midshipman and his sister, George and Cecile Vincent, who will become prominent in this history. George was much pleased with Harriette because she was so simple, good-natured, and unaffected, and his account to his sister was, "that he liked Miss Browne for a partner better than any other because she was not at all 'Missish,' and did not

talk much." George appeared to be a favourite with Lady Falkland, for she it was who introduced the young people to each other, and, at parting, she addressed a few words to him and his sister, which was remarked by Harriette, although she did not hear what was said. Harriette had shown herself so amiable, forgetful of herself, and so obliging to others, that she appeared to give very general satisfaction, and George was heard to say that she was very pretty.

It would be well if all children could have entered as harmlessly into these gaieties as did our little heroine, but she had not been used to them from her cradle, and her mind was stored with valuable materials for the formation of her future character. What a long course of these scenes of vanity might have produced even on her well disciplined and excellent disposition cannot be known, for she was never destined to the trial.

It appeared that Lady Falkland's private communication with George Vincent, on the evening of the juvenile ball, was an invitation to him and his sister Cecile to join a little dance at her house which was to take place one night during the following week. Besides this *fête*, which went off very delightfully, and where Harriette again shone conspicuous from her unaffected good-nature, many little amusements and gaieties were planned and executed by their kind aunt, which always included the young Vincents, with her own nephew and niece. In consequence of the frequent meetings of these young people, a great intimacy soon arose between them; and Mrs. Vincent, who also lived in T—— Street, perceiving the fondness her children evinced for the society of Harriette and Edward, called on Mrs. Browne and invited them to a party at her house. After this the interviews between the two families were of daily recurrence.

George was at an age when young gentlemen are wont to plume themselves not a little on their own dignity and importance, and he might have thought it a condescension to seek as his companion a school-boy who was nearly five years his junior; but he was a frank, kind-hearted "middy," with no such nonsense in his composition, and without himself being conscious of it, there was a latent feeling, independent of Edward's own merits, which made him think his *protégé* "such a nice little fellow." He, therefore, frequently called for Edward when he was going to walk; he

taught Harriette to play at chess, and Edward to skate on the Serpentine. George was rather reserved in his manner with strangers; small talk was not his forte, and most particularly was he puzzled by the pretty prattle of the little ladies whom he met in gauze and satin at the juvenile *fêtes*. In company, therefore, as we have before observed, he was very silent. But since the intimacy had advanced so much between himself and the Brownes, and as he had honoured Harriette by telling her that he was glad to see that she was not at all "missy," he had thrown off all reserve, and giving full vent to his spirits, was the promoter of every kind of hilarity and amusement.

The warmth of friendship increased even more rapidly between the sisters than with George and Edward. Cecile, at first sight, had the appearance of being very affected, but it was not really so, when she became better known. She was now in her twelfth year, six months younger than Edward, and was remarkably forward and precocious in manner and speech. She had never been in the habit of mixing familiarly with children of her own age, and this formality was more the result of being constantly in the company of grown persons than of any self-conceit or vanity. There was just a sufficient difference of years between the two girls to give an interest to this friendship, for we all like to have some one to depend on; one who will seek for and value our affection; and this pleasure Harriette experienced, for Cecile regarded her with a certain degree of deference, both from her being older as well as from being at so fashionable a school, whilst she felt gratitude and love for the consideration and kindness that were bestowed on her by her amiable friend. And is not this the relative position of two individuals, which ensures to them the utmost degree of happiness of which social affection is capable?

Cecile became so greatly attached to Harriette, during the course of these happy holidays, that she entreated her mother to send her to Forester House for the two years that Miss Browne was to remain there, that they might constantly be together; and most joyously did she clap her little hands when, at length, her indulgent mother yielded to this request. Mrs. Vincent was one of those good parents who, extremely anxious for the proper education of

her daughter, had hitherto devoted herself entirely to the work of instruction. She was eminently fitted for the task, so far as related to her fervent solicitude for the real advantage and welfare of Cecile, and from having a mind highly cultivated and accomplished : but she was of an uncertain and capricious temperament, which might have been produced by her great solicitude on this subject, but the defect, from whatever cause it might have arisen, rendered her wholly inadequate to the proper discharge of so important a duty.

Cecile possessed a generous and amiable disposition, and might have been made, under the guidance of a gentle yet steady hand, perfectly docile and tractable, but, by the incessant and uncalled-for fretting of her mother, she was becoming daily more wayward, troublesome, and irritable. She could not understand her mother's principles of administration, and, indeed, it could hardly be expected that she should do so, when the poor lady herself did not always fully comprehend them.

Like a young spirited horse, that from an injudicious use of spur and rein may be rendered vicious, and be taught to "jib," chafe, kick, and possibly, some day, throw his rider, and break his own knees ; thus poor Cecile was already beginning to contemn, and slight equally, the pettings, praise, rebukes, or threats that were lavished on her alternately, without regard to justice or common sense, by her capricious mother. And, probably, had she not been sent from home at this period, having once become indifferent to this whimsical control, she would have proceeded to resistance ; and finally rejecting all maternal authority or advice, her disposition, respectability, and happiness must have been destroyed together. But, fortunately for both, she was saved from such a fate, and removed for a time from what had of late been injurious to her temper ; her affection for her mother revived more strongly, from this temporary separation, the disagreeables of home were forgotten, and nothing but her mother's love and care retained in memory.

Mrs. Vincent had been a widow for many years, from the time indeed that Cecile was three years old. Her husband had been a military man, and the circumstances of his death were of a peculiarly distressing nature to his young

wife; but with the affliction comes a soothing antidote which happily enables us to bear what at first sight appears impossible. It has been remarked that women bear the loss of their husbands better than men the loss of their wives, and this has been advanced as a proof that woman's affection is less strong than man's. It is said that the children possess most of a mother's love, and that the husband thus becomes an object of secondary interest; as if her heart was not capacious enough to take in both, nor generous enough to retain the preference for her first love, and the father of her offspring! It is impossible that it can be so, and we would fain give a better reason for our sex's sake.

Women are more accustomed to suffering through life than men. They are consequently more patient; they are constitutionally more religious; they are more humble, trusting, and pliant; a severe trial, therefore, bends, but does not crush them! The lily in the storm bows its head for a time, pours out its cup of tears, and, when the sun shines out again, gradually lifts itself to the reviving effects of its genial beams. But the firm and brittle tree stands erect to meet its fate (it is unmanly to flinch), its branches are broken and torn, and its wounds take long to heal.

Captain Vincent had quitted England on foreign service only a few days previous to the birth of Cecile; and it was with feelings of the greatest happiness that three years afterwards Mrs. Vincent received the joyful intelligence that his regiment was recalled, and that her husband was on his passage homeward bound. What pleasure did Mrs. Vincent feel at the prospect of presenting to him the infant whom he had never seen! and who was now as beautiful a little child as ever prattled its first attempts at language and conversation, or that strutted about independently at this most interesting age.

The ship touched at Plymouth, from whence she received a second letter, stating the day and hour at which he hoped again to behold her and the dear children. George and Cecile were kept up later than usual on the evening of this happy day, which was to bring their dear papa. All had been bustle and anxiety to get everything arranged with the greatest nicety against the appointed time of his arrival. The fire blazed cheerfully in the drawing-room in T—

Street. That most luxurious of meals to a cold and weary traveller, something between a dinner and tea, and partaking of both, had been spread in the same room. The easy coat and slippers were routed out of the old chest, and once again were set to warm for their master before the fire. The children were officiously occupied in helping their mamma to peep out of the windows to look for the coach, in listening for the expected wheels, in turning and patting the clothes, or making some slight alterations in the arrangements of the table. Everything was made to look as cheerful and comfortable as possible for the long and anxiously expected stranger; for the "dear papa," who would soon be there to embrace them once more.

While thus employed, and also talking, to beguile the time, there came a loud knock at the front door; with eager joy Mrs. Vincent ran down the stairs to receive him first herself, but it was not *him* whom she had hoped to see; she heard Dr. Chafton announce his name, and she returned with a hasty and disappointed feeling to the drawing-room. She had given orders to the servant that whoever came that evening should be shown into the library, but hearing that it was only her medical attendant, the good old doctor, she rang the bell, and desired that he would come upstairs.

He entered the room, not with his usual cheerful, pleasant air, but with a countenance of most appalling solemnity. In an instant Mrs. Vincent perceived that he must be the bearer of some ill tidings, and exclaimed, in an agitated voice—

"For heaven's sake, doctor, what is the matter?"

In reply, with measured pauses, word by word, and with supplications between, that she would "not alarm herself, but keep herself calm," he narrated the circumstances and the event of Captain Vincent's death! This cautious mode of gently "breaking the truth" seems worse than a thousand deaths, and reminds one of the punishment of a culprit by the continual dropping of water on the head, until death puts an end to his sufferings. But many persons, in communicating any distress to those most nearly interested, whether by letter or by word of mouth, adopt a circumlocutive mode (surely not for the sake of effect at such a time) which keeps the mind in a state of suspended horror, without being able for a long period to understand what is its nature, or what the extent of the evil; and

thereby causing nearly as much torture as the known truth could possibly give.

This was the case with Mrs. Vincent ; she was paralyzed with alarm ; she listened apparently, but with a vacant gaze, and long ere Dr. Chafton had told of her husband's danger or death, she fell back insensible in her chair, and it was not until the following evening that she recovered herself sufficiently to be able to inquire into the reality of her fears, and the cause of her calamity. One presentiment had taken possession of her mind, that he whom she loved and hoped to see was gone, but how or when she had yet to learn. The ship had encountered a squall, and had been driven with violence on the Goodwin sands, and was wrecked, with all the passengers on board. Many boats were at hand, and pushed off at once to their assistance, and succeeded in saving all the lives excepting that of Captain Vincent and two other men, who could not be found. At the end of three days, however, the widow received news that the body of her husband had been thrown on shore, many miles distant from where the wreck had taken place. She hastened thither immediately, and no entreaties of her friends could prevent her from seeing his corpse.

Until this melancholy wish had been gratified Mrs. Vincent had been in the highest state of excitement and distress, but, from the moment that she had gazed on him, and once more pressed his cold lip, she had become calm and resigned. So tranquillizing is the effect of reality, when compared with the horrors which excited feelings and imagination will together produce. When the widow was introduced into the chamber where her husband's body was deposited, he was lying in his white shroud within the narrow limits of his coffin, his eyes closed, and appearing to be enjoying the placid slumber of an infant rather than bearing any of those dreaded appearances which we naturally attach to our ideas of death.

She followed her husband to his grave ; and in paying these last duties to the memory of one she had so dearly prized, great as the effort was to her at the time, yet she experienced a calmness and resignation which she would not otherwise have felt had she remained in London, and left to others these last and sacred offices. He was interred, the

day following her arrival, in the churchyard of — ; after which she returned again to her home and to her children.

She had continued to live in the same street, and in the same house in which Captain Vincent had placed her, before he had left England, and here we still find her, nine years after his decease, engaged in the one absorbing object of educating and otherwise promoting the interest and welfare of her children. For, notwithstanding some defects of character which unfitted her for the duties of teaching, she was a truly good and kind mother.

The characters of the two widows, Mrs. Vincent and Mrs. Browne, were essentially different, and presented a strong contrast to each other. The former was of a peculiarly active mind, and had she not exerted herself constantly, the unused mental energies would have preyed upon themselves. She knew how necessary unceasing occupation was to her health and spirits, and how important were these requisites to the well-being of her children. Had she given way in the least degree to melancholy reflections they would soon have mastered her better thoughts, and she would have sunk beneath them.

At the period of her bereavement she had, with great good sense, determined as little as possible to indulge herself in thoughts of her former happiness, or of the heart-breaking circumstances of her husband's death. Her children were now the absorbing objects of interest to her, and she strove to the utmost limits of her power and her purse, to promote their advantage. While George and Cecile were so young was the time for economizing. She had hitherto taught George all he knew, but being now in his ninth year, she sent him to a good classical school. She regulated her household with the greatest attention to nicety and economy, investigating and arranging everything herself.

George had remained at school for five years, when, at his own urgent request, he entered the navy as a midshipman. Some mothers might have been tempted to refuse such a request, but Mrs. Vincent only heaved a sigh, as the thought flashed across her mind, of the risk he would run, in a profession so full of hazard, and shuddered at the probability of his being exposed to the same frightful death as his poor father. But with so strong a predilection for the sea as George evinced, she feared that he might never settle

steadily to any other profession, and therefore yielded her own feelings to what she considered might be for the real benefit of her son.

Mrs. Browne, on the contrary, still mourning for her husband, never appeared to be inhabiting the sphere of worldly interests, but seemed to live in a little world of her own good, kind thoughts. The only active part she took in this confused drama of life was confined to her dear Harriette and Edward, or in the execution of some benevolent deed to those who came within her observation. Silent and unostentatious in the performance of her religious duties, it seemed alike immaterial to her where she was, or how occupied; submission, gentleness, patience, and kindly feeling, could be exercised in sunshine or in cloud; something to be done towards contributing to the happiness and comfort of those about her, and therefore no place seemed too narrow, or too lonely, for her to be contented and useful.

She spent her time, excepting during the vacations, almost entirely alone; an occasional exchange of visits with Lady Falkland or Mrs. Vincent being her only variety. She usually employed herself in reading and writing, and never seemed so tranquil and happy as in solitude, and when nursing in memory her little store of past happiness. Harriette was a great comfort to her, as she was very thoughtful, and affectionately attached to her mother; and even at this age, she seemed fully to enter into and sympathize with her parent's contemplative humour.

One might see the little widow early in the morning, clad in her sombre weeds, gliding noiselessly along the busy streets, bent on some act of charity or kindness, or on her way to attend the daily service of the church. Deprived of the fresh air of the country, to which from infancy she had been accustomed, and of the cheering and reviving effects which a sight of nature ever produces on a refined and sensitive mind, Mrs. Browne was slowly declining in health. She made, however, no remark on it herself, although her cheek was thinner and more pallid, and her step less firm, than it had been a twelvemonth before. Perhaps she hailed with a kind of melancholy pleasure these slight indications of an approaching period, when having concluded her necessary duties towards her children, and seen them comfortably provided for, she should gladly

resign her life here for that promised existence in the realms of ceaseless joy and rest. There she would again be united to the society of him whose presence had thrown a halo over her existence; but that gleam of happiness had set over her husband's grave, and her only duty on earth seemed now to be, to watch carefully and patiently over the welfare of her "jewels," and to prepare herself for the wished-for change.

A promise of a cadetship for Edward, obtained for him through the interest of his uncle, Sir Arthur Falkland, induced Mrs. Browne to send him for a couple of years to Addiscombe, at the expiration of which time he would be ready for the appointment, and the appointment would be ready for him. Not knowing hitherto exactly what to do with him, his mother had placed him with a clergyman who took only a "limited number" of pupils, or, rather, he would gladly have taken any number; but "limited" is a term used only as an apology for an extremely small establishment, and therefore, interpreted strictly, means only, that the tutor will never receive into his house more than he can get.

It had been the wish both of Mr. and Mrs. Browne, that Edward should have been educated for the church; but from the time he first learnt to lisp "*Propria quæ maribus*" (which we understand, that from being an only son he did perfectly at two years and a half old), he showed so strong a dislike to the study of the classics, and so great an inclination for gunpowder and idleness, that Mrs. Browne determined at length to ask his uncle to use his interest to procure him an appointment in the Company's service in India. It is very strange that a distaste for books, and a fondness for brass cannon and crackers, should be considered by so many parents as the adequate elements for making a good soldier and a hero.

Harriette had been so engaged and *fêted* by the continual kindness of her aunt and her friends, that the holidays had drawn nearly to a close without her having yet found a spare day for paying the much wished-for visit to her friend at Charlton; and the two girls had held no intercourse with each other since they had parted at Forester House. One fine, bright morning, therefore, when Harriette was at liberty from her numerous little gaieties, she succeeded in

persuading her mamma to take her to see her friend Mary. They were already dressed, and on the eve of setting out for this expedition, when the servant entered the room with a letter addressed to "Miss Browne."

Harriette quickly opened it, and found that it was from Miss Wilmot, and the disappointment which its contents entailed brought something very like a tear into the reader's eyes. There are few trials among the minor evils of life, which put our philosophy more to the test, than on a fresh, sunshiny morning, when we are dressed in our Sunday's best, with our hopes and spirits excited by the prospect of an agreeable expedition, some unlooked-for, accidental circumstance occurs, which suddenly dashes the cup of happiness from the lip, just as we are about to enter on our enjoyment, and lays it prostrate at our feet. After taking off the out-door dress, it requires a strong effort to return to the sitting-room, and with a cheerful, placid countenance, to resume the morning's occupation! Reader, did you never experience this?

In addition to the pleasure of the drive on a bright day, the change of scene, the little peep of the country which Harriette loved so well, and the sight of a young friend for whom she felt a strong affection—besides all this—Harriette experienced the disappointment which is so keenly felt, when we are thwarted in an intended action, which we know will afford pleasure to another. She felt convinced that the poor girl who was subjected to the contemptuous neglect of all her companions, would have been as much gratified by Mrs. Browne's calling on her mother, as by seeing Harriette herself; and that this, in addition to other little kindnesses which she had received from Harriette, would tend to raise her in the eyes of their schoolfellows. Harriette knew that Mary would feel this, and without any arrogance on her own part; for she did not harbour a thought that any difference really existed between them, or that the superiority was on her side, but she knew that Mary, aware of the contemptuous feeling which the narrow-mindedness of the other young ladies attached to the situation of half-boarder, was rendered very grateful for any slight attention. Harriette might, therefore, be pardoned for the apparently childish weakness which brought the bright glistening teardrop to her eye.

Miss Wilmot's letter ran thus:—

"MY DEAR MISS BROWNE—I fear that I shall not have the pleasure of seeing you during this vacation, as I had hoped; and indeed I now write to prevent your having a fruitless drive to Charlton, should you still think of paying me your promised visit. Mamma received yesterday a letter written at her uncle Mr. Leighton's request, desiring her to visit him, as he is in ill-health, and supposed to be declining gradually, and he wishes very anxiously to see her. Mamma therefore intends going, and taking me with her into Dorsetshire, where my great uncle lives; and ere you receive this, I suppose we shall be on our road westward. We talk of returning at the end of the week, unless Mr. Leighton should be in any danger, and wish mamma to remain longer with him; and, in that case, I shall return alone on the day the school meets again, when I shall hope to see you there. Until then, adieu, my dear Miss Browne, and believe me ever to be,

"Your affectionately attached and grateful,

"MARY.

"P.S. I have never seen my uncle, nor has my mamma since she was married.

"Charlton."

Harriette closed her letter, but did not think it necessary to put her philosophy too painfully to the stretch by resuming her work, and she therefore obtained permission from her mamma to go and relieve her feelings by a visit to her friend Cecile. George seemed to enter very warmly into the circumstances of this disappointment, and after a little private confabulation with Mrs. Vincent it was arranged that the Brownes should be invited to spend the day with them, and that, as none of the young people had ever seen the Tower, they should set off immediately to explore its curiosities. Mrs. Browne declined making one of the party, but joined them at dinner, and Mrs. Vincent undertook the duty of chaperon. And this day, which had begun so inauspiciously for Harriette, was one of the brightest she had hitherto known. George assumed to himself the task of escorting Harriette, and pointing out the objects most worthy of notice, and displayed such a store of knowledge

as perfectly astonished and delighted her, while his mother performed the same office for Cecile and Edward.

Unfortunately all pleasant agreeable things come to an end, and the more agreeable and pleasant they are the more quickly they seem to flit away ; and this was the case as well with this felicitous day as with the six weeks which comprised the term of this happy vacation.

"Black Monday" arrived, and Edward took his departure for Addiscombe, and the following day, all arrangements having been previously made with Mrs. Durett, with regard to her receiving Miss Vincent as a pupil, Harriette returned to Forester House, accompanied by her young friend. To Cecile all was new and delightful ; she fancied, from the method and regularity adopted in a school, that she had infinitely less to do than when at home ; she learnt all that was required of her with ease, and was happy in being with her dear kind Harriette, and in finding her studies so much less irksome than she had hitherto felt them to be.

They had scarcely been at school a month when the servant, one morning, announced to Miss Percivale that there were two ladies in the drawing-room who wished to see Miss Browne and Miss Vincent. They obeyed the summons immediately, and found, to their great delight, that these unexpected visitors were their respective mammas, accompanied also by George. This happy but brief interview was nevertheless poisoned by the presence of Mrs. Durett.

How this practice ever arose, or why it is permitted to continue, cannot easily be conceived. Is anything to be feared from a girl's being with her nearest and dearest relatives ? unless there is some cause to suspect that any trifling complaints may be made respecting the establishment, such as not having bread and butter enough, or the having too much rice-pudding. Or does the governess think her presence an acceptable and necessary compliment to the visitor ? What theory may have given rise to this odious practice we know not, but of one thing they may be assured, that neither the friends nor the young lady herself ever feel otherwise than annoyed from being so watched.

To gentlemen it is most peculiarly unpleasant, for not even men of the strongest nerve can succeed in disguising

the terror they experience when in the presence of a school-mistress. The usually flowing strain of conversation seems to be troubled and interrupted; they utter ill-connected thoughts in worse constructed sentences, as if in constant apprehension of breaking some mighty rule of grammar and etymology, and tremble lest they should thus bring down on their ill-fated heads some of the dread laws of Lindley Murray from the stern and well fraught tongue of the lady-governess. Added to this we have never seen either lady or gentleman whose habitually graceful ease of deportment was not discomposed in a school drawing-room, and one is therefore almost tempted to imagine that some horrid phantom of dumb-bells, fiddle-stick, stocks, and back-boards, rising in battle array before their frightened imaginations has paralyzed every muscle; for they sit like so many Egyptian idols, with their knees together, their feet turned out, and their arms close pinioned to their sides. It is greatly to be desired, therefore, for the sake of all parties, that this custom may be eventually abolished, and that a child may be allowed to enjoy uninterruptedly the few occasional visits of her parents and friends, with the guarded exception of male cousins and the like.

George told Harriette, aside, that he was going to leave England for perhaps two or three years, and that his ship was to sail within a few days, and he looked very large about the eyes when he said this, and a little pale and sorry. Then he kissed his sister on taking leave, and gave her a very pretty necklace as a keepsake, and, as he shook hands with Harriette, he slipped into her hand, unobserved by those present, a small packet, intimating at the same time that she was not to speak of it, and saying, "I hope you and Cecile will be great friends, and I know you will be kind to her," he followed the ladies down stairs.

Harriette was a little surprised at all this; she felt sorry that George was going away for so long a time, but she was not a little pleased at being treated by him so like a sister, and determined faithfully, therefore, to perform her part towards complying with his last wish, by doing everything in her power that could contribute to the gratification of Cecile. She soon sought and found an opportunity of being alone, when, on opening her little treasure, to her delight and astonishment she discovered a small gold locket,

containing some dark auburn hair, beautifully plaited, which must have been George's; and in the envelope were written these words—"Do not forget me, Harriette, while I am away. I shall never forget you."

How did our young friend feel on reading this, and receiving this sentimental token? "How very odd," she thought; "did George love her? was it possible? yet it must be so. At any rate she would with pleasure always remember his kindness." So she placed the pretty locket, with its true blue ribbon, round her neck, and determined henceforth to wear it for his sake.

It needs not to be said that imagination, memory, and hope effected their usual work within that fresh young heart, and that her love for George, which had commenced in this sisterly attachment, continued each month and year to develop itself with the other feelings and energies of her character, and to assume, in process of time, a still deeper and more intense reality.

CHAPTER IX.

The first subject of interest which occurred during the following half year was the development of the Misses Percivale's and Boulton's love affair. Mr. Alfred Sutton, being increasingly anxious to secure the lady of his heart, had very unremittingly urged her of late to consent to an elopement. Never was suitor known to be more deeply engaged heart and soul in his object! and after a few impassioned and combustible notes had passed between these real lovers Emma yielded to his entreaties to take a trip northward. Miss Percivale, at the same time, was suffering her feelings to be interested very deeply in her assiduous lover, who had of late more frequently persuaded her to meet and walk with him, and yet, thought she, "although no one can misunderstand his feelings towards me, nor his great attention, it is very singular that he has never spoken of love, nor, on any occasion, given me a hint of his intentions."

Miss Percivale had never hitherto kept an appointment with him without taking Miss Boulton, her innocent little confidante; but, on one occasion, she was tempted to leave her at home, on receiving the following note from Mr. Alfred Sutton:—

"Permit me, ever dear Miss Percivale, to address a few lines to you; and in the warmth of my admiration pardon me if I venture to blame you. But why should you show so little confidence in me, when you allow me the supreme happiness of an interview with you, which, allow me to say, is the joy of my existence! why, I say, should you always bring my cousin, Miss Boulton, with you? Of course this means that you do not wish to receive the avowal of my

affection, but, now, if you love me, and permit me to say I cannot doubt it, pray, as a proof that I merit your approval, and am not despised ! confer on me the favour of a meeting without Emma.

" I shall be at my mother's house, at Brompton, to-morrow, and she wishes to make acquaintance with you ; and, with her compliments (for she has heard me speak so much of you that she wishes to see you), she begs that you will consent to dine and spend the day with us, and she will be happy to fetch you, at any hour you will name, and bring a carriage for you. What pleasure shall I feel in seeing you and my mother together you little guess. Do not permit any unwonted coyness or reserve to prevent your making me the happiest of men by accepting this invitation. Pray fix an early hour for to-morrow, and do not be cruel, dear Miss Percivale ; and, with every sentiment of devout admiration, allow me to subscribe myself,

" Your faithful admirer,

" ALFRED SUTTON."

This note was despatched, and the messenger quickly returned with a favourable answer from the too happy Miss Percivale, who overwhelmed him with expressions of gratitude at the extreme kindness of Mrs. Sutton, and was led to fix on half-past two, P.M., for receiving that lady on the morrow. Mr. Sutton then sat down and indited a letter to his true love, and put it in the usual hiding-place in the garden :—

" MY DEAREST TREASURE !—Give me credit for my present diplomacy (as the newspapera say). I have arranged everything, and have made an appointment with your teacher to spend the day at my mother's, who will fetch her out of our way at half-past two to-morrow afternoon. It will be quite dusk by half-past six. I cannot, of course, bring the carriage to the door, but, if you will venture that little way by yourself, you will find the chaise and four capital horses standing opposite the third house on the right hand side of — street, as you come out of the square. I will be ready for you—be punctual—and before you can be missed we shall be far on our road to Gretna. Capital fun, my love. I love spirit in a girl ; and we shall soon be out

of reach of Mrs. Durett and her 'assistant furies,' as you so cleverly call them. Courage, dearest—rely on the affection of your Alfred—delightfully romantic to be sure it will be! The whole town will ring of it. There are seldom love-matches happening in our high circles—all is money and interest. I could be happy with you anywhere. How your old governor will be astonished—he aint used to such a dash I should think. With a little coaxing we shall soon bring them round again; and never fear about your mamma; mothers never dislike a little spirit and romance in their daughters. Be courageous, and be punctual, and adieu, my dearest life! I shall soon be able to repay your generous affection by years of gratitude and love.

"Your too happy and faithful

"A. S."

The following day Mrs. Sutton came for Miss Percivale, and although the vehicle destined to convey her was a hackney coach, yet the beloved of Alfred was too happy in experiencing this distinction to admit of her refined feelings being shocked by such a circumstance, and she set off, in high spirits, with her "future mother-in-law."

Miss Percivale thought her new acquaintance rather an odd little woman, but she recollected having heard that aristocratic people are very odd sometimes, and are more free and jocular in their manner than persons of less rank can afford to be. The old lady seemed to possess high spirits, and was very merry in disposition, and tried to be as agreeable as she could, so that, after a very short time, they became as intimate and sociable as if they had known each other for years.

They drove to Brompton, and before one of the houses in — Row the coach stopped. Miss Percivale felt considerably disappointed. Was this then the home of Mr. Sutton, who always talked so big? Instead of a large mansion and establishment in a smart or fashionable part of London, here they were set down at a Row in a suburb. The little piece of garden before the house was very small; the house itself was very small; the little fat maid with red elbows that opened the door was very small also. The diminutive aspect of everything that met her eye, when she had expected to find all grand and magnificent, greatly astonished Miss Percivale.

There must be some reason for their living in retirement in this way, just for the present, thought Miss Percivale, and she resolved very soon to satisfy all her curiosity and get at the truth of the subject from the sociable little old lady herself; and as everything looked bright, cheerful, and clean, she determined in the mean time to make herself quite comfortable.

The parlour on the ground floor was very tiny, and the furniture was very large, and appeared to be infinitely more ponderous and clumsy from the scantiness of the space allowed to it. There stood in the centre of the apartment a large mahogany table, and ranged round the walls were a large old-fashioned sofa, covered with chintz, six chintz cushioned chairs to match, a "what-not," with a few shells, pamphlets, &c., placed on it, a music stand, and a piano-forte. This last-mentioned article excited some surprise in the guest, for "who could perform on this instrument here?" Some degree of skill and judgment was necessary to insinuate herself into the apartment, and when this was once achieved, the best way for securing sufficient elbow room was only to be found by sitting down.

Mrs. Sutton soon led Miss Percivale up stairs to take off her bonnet, as she said that she expected Alfred in every minute, and they were going to dine at half-past three. On the way up stairs the bustling little body opened the drawing-room door to show her visitor that they had another apartment besides the parlour, when the spectacle presented to her view was little else than brown holland. The curtains of the windows were in long brown holland bags, looking like "hop pockets;" the blinds, which were drawn down, were brown holland; the floor was covered all over with brown holland, and so were the chair seats and sofa—all was brown holland. The little looking-glass over the chimney-piece had its frame enclosed in yellow spider-net, and so also had the frames of the three pictures that hung against the wall.

"This is our best room, Miss Percivale. I like to show you everything. We don't 'keep it up' much, as they say. We use it very often, though I like to have all the covers on because the furniture is very good; but yet I don't like a useless room, a room too good to be used, so when we have company we sit here in the summer. But I thought, as I wished to treat you as a friend, and not like a stranger, we

should be more comfortable down stairs to-day; it will be more snug and sociable, and my son Alfred also prefers the parlour when he comes here."

Miss Percivale admired as much as she could do the best room, and by the time that she had arranged her toilet, which she performed on this serious occasion with peculiar care, Mr. Sutton had arrived. It is a delightful thing to find oneself really possessed of a lover! and here so comfortably domesticated all at once with himself and his mother, and everything apparently going on so smoothly, how could she be otherwise than happy. And Miss Percivale fully appreciated the advantages of her position. But it happened, although everything appeared so plain and intelligible, that the members forming this trio now assembled had each a separate game, and none understood the other's play, excepting Mr. Alfred Sutton, and he comprehended it all, and was well satisfied. This worthy young gentleman arrived precisely at half past three, was in very high spirits, appeared greatly disposed to make himself agreeable, and extremely pleased at seeing their guest already seated with his mother.

As soon as he came Mrs. Sutton deputed him to do the honours in entertaining the visitor, while she retired to see that the chicken roasting at the kitchen fire was properly basted and all doing well, for her domestic was inexperienced in the preparation of such rare dainties; and presently the little old lady, after having herself assisted in taking it up, ushered it into the parlour, together with a small piece of bacon, some potatoes, and stewed artichokes. An afterpiece of apple tart completing the whole repast.

It was very seldom that so smart a dinner "smoked upon her board," but the dear little old lady doted on her underserving son, and strove now, as on every other occasion, to do all within her power to please him, and therefore the due entertainment of a friend of his was a subject of no small interest with her, and had met with her best attention. Poor Miss Percivale practised a great many silly airs, but still she was on her best behaviour, because she was so happy. It is true that she had at first felt disappointed at seeing the moderate style of the whole establishment of her supposed faithful swain; and where she expected spacious drawing-rooms and powdered lackeys to find only a diminu-

tive house and one diminutive maid servant. But still a swain was a swain, and such things are not to be met with every day, so Miss Percivale determined to overlook all defects, and make the best of her present very promising speculation. And this was particularly judicious on the part of Miss Percivale, because all relating to the *ménage* of her hostess, although extremely simple and moderate, was infinitely superior to anything she was likely to command out of Forester House.

They had made a good dinner, and were sitting very sociably round the fire, and the guest was thinking how long it would be before her assiduous lover should enter on the subject nearest their hearts, and in a proper business-like style make the offer and name the day, and was reflecting how very comfortable she felt, when the clock struck five. Mr. Sutton produced his watch to see, as he said, "whether the time could possibly have passed so quickly," when he informed Miss Percivale that it was with regret that he must leave her for a short time, as it was necessary for him to go out, but that he hoped to be back again about nine o'clock, when he should solicit the pleasure of attending her home to Forester House. They consequently parted "*au revoir*," but they met not on the next occasion under the same happy auspices as seemed to preside over them this evening.

We now turn to the other string of the *beau*. With Emma Boulton the day had passed on less rapidly than with the happy Miss Percivale. But at length the hour of six was heard to strike on all the clocks in the neighbourhood. During this long day, poor Emma had occasionally felt a slight shudder as the thought occurred to her of the daring and hazardous step she was about to take. But she determined to keep up her spirits, and "screw her courage to the sticking place," by thinking how dashing it would be, and how much she should dread her Alfred's contempt for her vacillation and inconstancy of purpose should she give it up.

She retired on hearing the hour strike, and hastily put together such articles as she thought might be required for a few days' journey, and having tied up her bundle, and arranged her shawl and bonnet, she opened the door of the room. She listened—no one was moving—not a sound was

to be heard—the very stillness was awful. She had been told that Mrs. Durett was gone out to dinner—her school-fellows and teachers were at the back of the house in the school-room. There could be no danger of encountering any one now. She therefore softly and stealthily descended the stairs, but how unusually loud they seemed to creak at every step! She had gained the front door—her hand was on the lock—she hesitated. “Can I go?” she asked herself internally. “No, I will not—cannot.” She thought of relinquishing her bold design, when she heard the sound of advancing steps. There was not another moment to be lost—to be caught there would be dreadful—what could she do? She instantly, though softly, lifted the latch, closed the door after her, and rushed into the street.

The lamps were not yet lighted, all looked dusk and drear. Although terrified almost to fainting, she hastened forward with a palpitating heart, turned the corner into — Street, and there, to her great relief and joy, stood the carriage and the four horses exactly at the spot appointed by Mr. Sutton. In an instant the ready postillion dismounted, opened the carriage door, let down the steps, she was in, and they had driven off.

With her Alfred beside her, her feelings of alarm and agitation began to subside, and she commenced talking very fast—about her recent fright, her present joy, of the probable rage of Mrs. Durett when she should discover her absence, of the fun of having escaped her so cleverly, and of the effect which the news would have on her papa and mamma; but strange to say, the figure wrapped in the large cloth cloak, and seated by her side, returned no answer. She was surprised and vexed, and at length exclaimed rather pettishly—

“Alfred, will you not speak to me? what does this silence mean? Pray do not frighten me—do speak one word, dearest Alfred. Have I done so much for your sake, and yet you treat me thus? Oh! if you will not speak to me, I must scream, and stop the carriage. Do—pray do, dearest!” and she began a little whimper.

The only reply which this ebullition of feeling produced was, that her companion, placing a hand gently on hers, to intimate her being quiet, said in a low, yet stern whisper, “Hush, be still—speaking may only do you mischief!”

Emma, perceiving that remonstrance would be useless, and rendered tranquil by the authoritative and decided manner of her companion, felt that her best course would be to await patiently her Alfred's inclination to enter into conversation. They continued driving rapidly forward for above an hour, when Emma made another attempt to lead her taciturn companion to speak to her, and in a gentler and more tender strain said, in a whisper, "Dear Alfred, if you love me, speak one word to me, and tell me"

But here again she received a harsher check than before, for her arm was grasped more roughly, and she was bidden—"Be silent for your own sake!"

She became now more alarmed than on the previous occasion, "for such conduct," she thought, "was unjustifiable in the man whom she had favoured with such a preference as made every feeling of delicacy and duty sink before it. It could not be Alfred—the manner was too dictatorial and unkind, and the voice seemed so unlike to his—it could not be him; and if not, who could it be?" Whilst poor Emma trembled with apprehension as these fears arose in her mind, they continued driving on at a rapid rate, and she was gradually sinking into a state of insensibility, and would probably have fainted, had she not been roused by the sudden stopping of the carriage at the door of a large mansion.

A servant instantly answered the loud ring of the postilion, when what was the consternation of our little heroine of romance on hearing her friend in the corner of the chaise ask, "Is Mr. or Mrs. Boulton at home?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then hand this young lady out," when she immediately recognized the voice of Mrs. Durett.

There was no time for hesitation; frightened, disappointed, humbled, and bathed in tears, poor Miss Boulton was led at once by her stern and angry governess into the presence of her father and mother. Mrs. Durett soon acquainted them with the cause of their strange and unexpected appearance at Duns cott Lodge, at such an hour of the evening, and produced from her reticule all that remained of Mr. Sutton's last letter to Emma. It had accidentally fallen into her hands through the medium of one of her servants, who had found it only partially consumed in the music-room grate, where Miss Boulton must have care-

lessly thrown it, without suspecting that any part of it would escape the flames; but, unfortunately, all the latter part relating to the appointment, was uninjured, and although scorched, yet all the words were legible. Mrs. Durett had consequently kept the assignation herself with this hero of romance, having previously engaged a Bow Street officer to accompany her. They found the young gentleman seated in the carriage and four, and begging him to alight, in the gentle tone adopted by the deputies of justice, the officer took him into custody, when Mrs. Durett, to her no small surprise, recognised in him the foreman of the pianoforte maker who lived on the opposite side of the square to Forester House.

Mr. and Mrs. Boulton expressed to Mrs. Durett their thanks for the promptitude and judgment with which she had acted in this business; they requested her to remain with them that night, as she had travelled nearly twenty miles, but she declined this invitation, being desirous to return immediately. Although a necessary politeness had suggested the propriety of Mrs. Boulton offering this civility, yet it was a great relief to them all when it was declined, for the parents were so greatly distressed at what had occurred, that they wished to be alone.

It was not difficult for them, after Mrs. Durett's departure, to convince their daughter of the enormity of her conduct, of the happy deliverance she had experienced from disgrace and misery, and of the censure which for years she had entailed upon herself, by this clandestine intercourse and engagement with an unknown mechanic; and both father and mother shed tears of sorrow at their child's misconduct, and of gratitude for the recent escape from a plot which, had it succeeded, must have subjected her and themselves to years of disappointment and wretchedness.

CHAPTER X.

We must return to the two ladies at Brompton, whom we left expecting and awaiting anxiously the re-appearance of the young worthy who was now cooling a little of his courage and his love in the "lock-up" of Mary-le-bone parish.

Miss Percivale had been impatiently watching for the return of her lover during every half hour since he had quitted her side. Nine o'clock at length struck, and each minute that now passed seemed more replete with anxiety than the last. She listened in vain for the well-known footstep in the garden—none was heard. It was getting late, and she ought to go; but could she relinquish the pleasure of being escorted home by him? It would only perhaps be a few minutes later. But although Miss Percivale was a tolerable accountant at other times, yet she forgot that all the minutes that were now escaping would in due time amount to an hour. She ought, according to the rules of Forester House, to have been at home at ten, so that when the clock in the kitchen struck that hour, she was so greatly dismayed, and so very uneasy, that she requested Mrs. Sutton to let Betsy "go call a coach."

Mrs. Sutton would not "let a coach be called," and instead of giving orders to that effect, she desired the factotum to bring in the supper tray, saying, "that they would wait no longer for Mr. Alfred, and that by the time her friend had eaten something, he would certainly be in." Thus beguiled, Miss Percivale stayed on and on in fear and trembling, yet with the delusive hope that Mr. Sutton would return.

"What can I do?" thought she. "I fully intended going home before half-past nine, and it is now nearly an

hour later. Mrs. Durett will be greatly displeased, for I cannot possibly get back to — Square till after the time when the family usually retire to rest. What can I do?"

Her further cogitations were interrupted by her old friend, who was at length becoming alarmed at the prolonged and unaccountable absence of her son. She entreated her guest, as a favour and kindness to herself, not to think of leaving her, until she had seen or heard something of Alfred. She told her that it was too late to think of going so far alone that night, and assured her that without any difficulty she could be accommodated with a bed.

Miss Percivale thought over this invitation before she replied to it. She knew that Mrs. Durett had engaged herself for the same evening to a dinner party; and as she would probably not return until very late, and long after the young ladies and the teachers were supposed to be fast asleep, there was little probability of her absence being remarked until the following day. And it also occurred to her, that if she could slip in the first thing in the morning, when the cook was sweeping the steps of the front-door, she might, by a trifling *douceur*, bribe her to silence; and then no one would know of her having been from home during the night. She therefore concluded that her best policy was to accept Mrs. Sutton's kind offer of a bed; and urged by her self-interest, and also by her wish to please the little old lady, she consented to do so. Betsy was therefore called, and told that she might retire to rest, as nothing else would be required of her. The fire was stirred and replenished, and the ladies prepared themselves for the vain and weary task of sitting up to await the return of the truant.

They had an anxious watch until nearly three in the morning, when the poor mother, overcome at length with fatigue and agitation, which the unusually late hour and her son's absence had together produced, was persuaded by Miss Percivale to take some repose. The latter also required it as much as the old lady, for in addition to her distress on her Alfred's account, she feared the appearance which her having remained out all night, without permission, might have in the sight of Mrs. Durett.

She rose early and little refreshed; she would not disturb Mrs. Sutton, who had fallen asleep, but hastened home on

foot to —— Square, and wearied and out of breath, after her long and hurried walk, she reached Forester House. The door was fortunately open, and no servant near it; greatly rejoiced, she darted in, and was in the act of ascending the stairs when she saw Harriette Browne turning into the music-room, and, observing that she was recognised, she followed her into the apartment, determined to make a friend of her, as her best method of ensuring secrecy.

“Good morning, Miss Browne,” and she kissed Harriette’s cheek for the first time, as she accosted her; “my dear child, I have been out this morning on important business, but I wish you not to mention it to any one, my love.”

Shall I say that, young as Harriette was, she felt disgusted at such conduct! but it was so. She knew why Miss Percivale was so kind, for the first time, and she recoiled from the hypocritical kiss of seeming affection. Her teacher’s prevarication was evident to her, for she, as well as the other pupils who slept in the same room, knew that Miss Percivale had not been at home during the night. She did not, for she dared not, express by word or gesture the contempt she felt towards her instructress, nor did she wish to do her an ill turn, and therefore replied meekly—

“Very well, ma’am, I will not speak of it unless I am obliged; but Miss Crossman says that she is sure something very important happened last night, for Mrs. Durett did not return till very late, and we have seen nothing of Miss Boulton since last evening. Besides, all missed you in the west room this morning, because your bed has not been disturbed; and unless you ask the other young ladies of your ‘family’ not to mention your absence, my being silent will be of no use, for I left them all talking and wondering about it.”

“Thank you, thank you, my dear child; how very kind of you. I am so obliged to you, for I never thought of that myself, so, whilst I go and speak to them, do you just run up, my love, and toss my bed open, and make it look as if I had slept in it. And if you do that I shall be quite safe, for the front-door was open when I came, so that the servants know nothing about it. I do so dread that Mrs. Durett; she’s so snappish when she thinks there is

anything wrong. Oh, my dear Miss Browne, I cannot tell you how I shall love you."

"I am afraid you will not love me very much, ma'am, for it is impossible for me to do what you ask. I do not wish to appear ill-natured, but I cannot deceive by doing this, any more than by telling a falsehood. Indeed, it is wrong, and I must not do it."

"Nonsense, child! how very precise and old-fashioned you are; you will be just like a methodist by and by, always canting about right and wrong in such little trifles." Then changing her tone, from the petulant or "snappish" to the coaxing and persuasive, she continued—"But, you won't tell, dear, I know, now you have said you won't; I love you for that; so, whilst I go upstairs and take off my bonnet and shawl, do you go to my young ladies, and beg them not to remark to any one my having been out last night; and say that I was accidentally detained with an old friend. You can say this, little Miss 'Propriety,' because it is quite true, and then I'll take good care to reward you all for your kindness, and I'll excuse all the English lessons this morning, and you may say a piece of old instead."

"No, indeed, Miss Percivale," said Harriette, in an imploring and submissive tone. "I wish you would not ask me; I cannot do anything in it really, excepting that I will promise to be silent, unless I am compelled to speak."

"These are fine airs and graces to be sure, Miss! But it is just like you. You are a little cross saucy thing, to set yourself up to speak to me in this way, and to judge my conduct indeed! I have your promise of silence, nevertheless, and I can do without your assistance; but, since you are so impertinent, let me tell you I shan't excuse your lessons, so you'll please to learn them all. I came to you in the best possible humour, but it is impossible to be kind to some people, and you have provoked illusage from me now, and have always done so before, whenever you have received it."

Saying which she turned angrily away, and, removing her bonnet and shawl, she proceeded at once to the school-room, where, as Harriette told her, none of the young ladies were yet assembled, excepting the few who belonged to her chamber. Here, by dint of a few kisses, a little

coaxing, and many promises of future favours, some tender appeals to their feelings of gratitude for those already bestowed, and an exemption from the morning's tasks, Miss Percivale succeeded in extracting assurances that nothing "in the world" should make them even appear to know of her having been absent on the preceding night.

Having surmounted this difficulty she then sought her own apartment, speedily arranged her toilet, and disarranged the bed-clothes, and descended in due time, and at the usual hour, to the busy scene of scholastic occupation with the other teachers. The morning was passing quietly on, and no one seemed to have observed Miss Percivale's absence, and she was on the point of congratulating herself on her good fortune, wondering what could have become of "poor dear Mr. Sutton," and what the occurrence could have been which took place yesterday, while she was enjoying her visit at Brompton, of which Harriette Browne had spoken, when that young lady entered the school-room, and told the head teacher that Mrs. Durett wished to see her directly. Miss Percivale gave a fierce glance of suspicion at Harriette, and having spitefully turned the key of her work-box, and set it aside, immediately obeyed the summons with some palpitation of heart.

The axle upon which the whole wheel of business revolved at Forester House was seated at her desk, when her chief spoke entered the drawing-room. She put her writing aside with a vexed and care-worn look, and began to address Miss Percivale with a voice and manner which very soon satisfied her that, whatever might be the cause of annoyance, it was in no degree connected with herself. She, therefore, breathed freely again, while Mrs. Durett proceeded—

"Good morning, Miss Percivale; you know how much confidence I have always reposed in you, and therefore it is that I now send for you, at a time when I feel almost overpowered by the distress I have recently experienced. I wish that you had not been engaged out yesterday, as your presence and assistance would have been a great relief and comfort to me. You have heard nothing in the house have you? I wish it to be kept perfectly secret from the servants, as well as from the children."

Miss Percivale assured her that nothing whatever had come to her knowledge, when Mrs. Durett continued—

“Take care, then, I entreat you, that it does not get wind. A circumstance has occurred, which has caused me much vexation, and, if I do not take very great care to hush it up, it will certainly be the ruin of my establishment. Miss Boulton attempted an elopement from this house yesterday!”

“Miss Boulton! yesterday?” echoed the confidant, in an incoherent and meaningless tone.

“Yes, indeed, yesterday; and with a trumpery journeyman fellow, or some such thing, who pretended to be a gentleman; but happily I found it out in time, and carried her myself safely to Duncott Lodge last evening, after having consigned him to the care of an officer of police, to be placed in the watch-house until I make my deposition before the magistrates in Bow Street, whither I am going immediately, and as it is rather a nervous undertaking for a lady, I am desirous that you should accompany me.”

Poor Miss Percivale, never suspecting that a “journeyman” could possibly have even a remote connexion with herself or her affairs, readily consented to go with Mrs. Durett, only too happy in finding that the subject of this interview had no reference to herself, or her absence during the past night.

The carriage was already at the door, and the two ladies were quickly dressed, when the following letter was delivered by the servant to Mrs. Durett:—

“MADAM—Mrs. Boulton is so ill this morning, in consequence of the distress we have experienced since seeing you, that she is incapable of writing to you herself. We expressed ourselves as ‘grateful’ for the promptitude with which you had saved our dear child from utter ruin; and our thanks are assuredly due to a certain extent, but permit me to say that there must be something fundamentally wrong in the arrangements of your house, together with a blameable neglect of the young people committed to your charge, for a plot of this kind to have been matured between our daughter and this low fellow. Should not your pupils be so guarded and restricted as to render such indiscretions impracticable?”

"I do not wish, madam, to speak harshly, for I feel too much humbled at finding our daughter's conduct so unworthy, but certainly a very great portion of the blame must rest with you. It nearly breaks her mother's heart as well as my own to think of the unprincipled, undutiful part our Emma has acted. We cannot persuade the poor child to speak—she weeps incessantly. God grant that they may be tears of sincere contrition. I am anxious to consult with you as to what is to be done with this man, and I am come to town purposely with this view. A note will find me at the Albany, at any hour this morning. I return home at five o'clock. I should feel glad to have an interview with you, if possible, as I am anxious to know whether you have obtained any information which can exonerate in some degree our dear Emma.

"I remain, madam,

"Your obedient servant,

"HENRY C. BOULTON.

"Albany."

Having concluded the perusal of this letter, which greatly discomposed the features of Mrs. Durett for the time, she descended to the carriage, accompanied by Miss Percivale, and drove off without their having exchanged a word. This address from Mr. Boulton induced her to alter her first intention, and as they proceeded through the noisy, dirty streets that led to Bow Street her mind was fully occupied in reflecting on what had passed, and in arranging the best method of averting from herself the censure which must, as Mr. Boulton had observed, naturally attach to her, and bring her establishment into disrepute.

She argued thus. The man certainly deserved punishment—Mr. Boulton would probably proceed against him in the usual form of prosecution—the whole business would, in that case, be brought into a law court, and become generally known. The defendant would have to pay damages and costs, and as it was improbable that he was prepared to meet such heavy expenses, he would be imprisoned instead.

She felt confident that Mr. Boulton would as gladly avoid publicity, on his daughter's account, as she, for the sake of her school, and the thought struck her that it would not be difficult for her to persuade him to compromise the matter and accept a sum of money from the man, which

would be a sufficient punishment for his offence, and perhaps satisfy Mr. Boulton's notions of justice, as well as if the matter was put into the hands of the lawyers. And, should he be so scrupulous as to think it beneath the dignity of a gentleman to accept the money himself on such an occasion, he might require it to be paid to some charity.

One hundred pounds she judged would be as much as could reasonably be exacted from a man of such a grade, and rather than Sutton should be detained she would willingly advance the sum herself. This she thought she could easily repay herself, by making German and the Harp extra to the next pupils she should receive. She therefore decided on seeking a private interview with the culprit, thinking, by this apparent act of benevolence, to bind him to secrecy as to what had passed, and to extract from him a promise that he would entirely quit the neighbourhood of her residence.

By the time she had fully arranged this plan, they drew up before the door of the police office, and she was descending from the carriage, and about to enter the seat of justice, when she recognised among the crowd that stood near, the person whom she had employed on the previous evening to take her friend the "journeyman" into custody. She inquired of him whether the prisoner was yet arrived there, and being answered in the affirmative, she asked if he could procure for her a private interview with him. Accompanied by her satellite, Miss Percivale, she was immediately ushered into a small anteroom, or lobby, where stood two men. One had his back towards them, as the ladies entered, but, on his turning round, Miss Percivale recognised, to her surprise, her friend and lover, Mr. Sutton.

Highly delighted at this unexpected meeting, she stepped eagerly forward to greet him, but, having made a slight attempt to intimate silence, he averted his face instantly. This precaution was, unfortunately for her, to little purpose, for she exclaimed in an audible voice—

"Oh, Mr. Sutton, how glad I am to see you; we were so frightened about you last night, you don't know. Where have you been?" Before she could receive any answer to this appeal, Mrs. Durett called her aside, and said in a whisper—

"Are you acquainted with that man, Miss Percivale?"

"Oh yes, this *gentleman*, ma'am, I know him very well. I dined at his mother's house, at Brompton, yesterday."

"What do you mean; then you are a party concerned in this elopement, are you? This is the very creature whom I caught in the act of setting off in a carriage and four, forsooth! with Miss Boulton, for Gretna Green, and the foreman of Mr. Milsom, the pianoforte maker. But I cannot speak to you further on this subject just now." She had turned to enter on the purport of her visit to Mr. Sutton, he being the only person left in the room besides the ladies, when she heard some one fall, and on looking round perceived that Miss Percivale had fainted.

With the assistance of Mr. Sutton (who certainly did not perform this delicate task with his usual grace, for he looked remarkably sheepish and ill at ease) Miss Percivale was lifted into a chair, and, having asked for a glass of water, with the aid of that and her own crystalized vinegar, Mrs. Durett quickly succeeded in reviving the poor lady. As soon as she was sufficiently recovered to be able to stand, she was led to the carriage, with orders to the servants to drive the invalid back to — Square, and, after having placed her under the housekeeper's care, to return as quickly as possible for their mistress.

Mrs. Durett then joined Mr. Sutton again, in the little apartment where she had left him, and, proceeding at once to business, she commenced as follows, in a tone in which was blended the dignity of the judge and the lenity of the friend:

"I suppose, sir, that you cannot be ignorant of the deplorable situation in which you have placed yourself, by this nefarious transaction of yesterday, nor of the heavy penalty you have incurred, should Mr. Boulton (the father of the young lady) proceed against you in the ordinary way? Of course your property cannot be such as to enable you to meet the expenses to which a law-suit will necessarily expose you. Kindness and clemency, we must own, are faults when carried to excess, and these, sir, have ever been my foibles. For, on this occasion, I am allowing my feelings of pity to interfere with my sense of justice and the common weal. You deserve a very severe punishment, and nothing but a prison is now before you.

"To save you from this, so miserable a fate, has been the

object of this visit. I am now on my way to seek an interview with Mr. Boulton, for the purpose of endeavouring to persuade him to relinquish his thoughts of prosecution, and to see if he will not accept tacitly a sum of money from you at once, and pursue the business no further. And this, sir, it is my intention to advance for you, so that you may not be detained another night in this disgraceful confinement. If, therefore, I succeed in this embassy of mercy, with the justly exasperated father, I shall send him the money in your name during the course of the morning, and as then no one will appear to depose against you, before the magistrates, you will be liberated without further delay or difficulty."

Mr. Sutton might have, perhaps, been overcome by his sense of gratitude for such exceeding and unusual kindness and liberality on the part of a perfect stranger, had he not, during the progress of this very feeling harangue, slightly guessed at the real motive of urgent self-interest, which lay so ill concealed beneath the ostensible covering of genuine benevolence. He was, therefore, sufficiently master of himself to assume the deepest humility and contrition, and expressed his high estimate of the obligation conferred on him by the unbounded generosity of his deliverer.

And he observed, in conclusion, "that it would be impossible for him ever to repay such unmerited kindness," and "that if there was a thing that could affect a stony wicked heart like his, it was the contemplation of such a noble character as Mrs. Durett's. And that the sympathy and kindness of the softer sex in the hour of distress came like oil into a wound; or, like the key of the instrument maker, they put the jarring strings of man's passions all in harmonious tune again."

Mrs. Durett received all this with an air of smiling benignity, and thus the two parties, conscious of their own insincerity and suspecting it in each other, appeared as if humouring his companion in the parts that were being acted. They now separated, the governess having obtained, as a proof of Mr. Sutton's gratitude, a promise which he very readily made of quitting his employment with Mr. Milsom, and leaving that neighbourhood; with also an assurance that he would not mention, either directly or indirectly, his own ill conduct or Mrs. Durett's interference in his behalf.

The first condition he more readily entered into, in conse-

quence of his having just become a junior partner with Mr. Milsom, and had undertaken the charge of a branch business in another part of the town, whither he was very shortly going to remove, when his hopes respecting Miss Boulton's fortune tempted him to higher views. Still he had not acted like the dog with the shadow, for he had not shaken off the certainty, while he was in pursuit only of what might prove ideal; so he was still in high favour with Mr. Milsom, and his prosperity remained unimpaired. Mrs. Durett left him, therefore, in limbo for the present, and, stepping into her carriage, which had returned just as the conference was ended, ordered the coachman to drive to the Albany.

Here a very different interview took place from any Mrs. Durett had anticipated, and the ensuing conference was the cause of the total overthrow of all her well-concerted plans.

On being ushered into the presence of Mr. Boulton, she found another gentleman seated with him, and they were apparently engaged in earnest conversation at the further end of the room. Both rose at her entry, and the meeting was evidently not agreeable to either party, for there was a cold and restrained manner in Mr. Boulton's greeting, which made it apparent to Mrs. Durett, through the thin texture of external politeness, that he was highly displeased at her neglect of the charge he had committed to her.

After a faint and ineffectual effort on the part of the lady to talk on indifferent subjects, the presence of a stranger having led her to avoid entering on the purpose of her visit, and finding that there appeared no symptoms of his retiring, she at length asked Mr. Boulton whether he would allow her a few minutes' private conversation with him, proposing at the same time, that if this should be inconvenient at present, to call on him again when he should be more at liberty.

"There is no occasion whatever, madam, for us to retire," replied Mr. Boulton. "This is a particular friend of mine, to whom I have just imparted all the painful circumstances which have led to your visit, and I wish to know all you may have done with regard to this man—Sutton, I believe, is his name."

Mrs. Durett, with very evident embarrassment, narrated her plans, and a part of her morning's business. Spoke of

her visit to Sutton—his apparent contrition—and that, being greatly alarmed at the idea of a prosecution, he was willing to pay any sum to Mr. Boulton to avoid having the matter brought into a law court, and to free himself from any further disgrace or longer restraint. That seeing the advantage this proposal would be to all parties, particularly to Miss Boulton, as of course her parents would be anxious, on her account, to avoid giving publicity to so unpleasant an affair, she had herself undertaken to intercede in the young man's behalf, and that this was the object of her visit; and finally, she expressed a hope that Mr. Boulton would see the matter in the same light as she had done, and name the sum required, which Sutton would pay in the course of the day, when he might be immediately liberated.

The great share of interest which Mrs. Durett personally took in having the business thus quickly hushed up did not escape the observation of either of the gentlemen, and there was a disagreeable curl on the lip of the stranger during the whole of her discourse, which rather troubled her. When she had ceased, the latter, addressing himself to Mr. Boulton, said—

“It is a most fortunate circumstance for this lady, as well as to preserve secrecy with regard to what has occurred, that this man Sutton is as totally ignorant of the law on this point as this lady appears to be. If a man, from motives of lucre, runs away with a woman of property against her will, it is a serious *crime*, for which he is punishable by transportation or long imprisonment. But this was not your daughter's case. There can be no punishment for a man who elopes with a girl from school, with her own free will, and marries her. Therefore there can be no punishment for an unsuccessful attempt of the kind. But were it otherwise no gentleman could accept a sum of money honourably, or even legally, to compromise a prosecution. It would, for obvious reasons, be detrimental to the ends of justice and policy of the law to do so. The only way in which you could, under similar circumstances, receive money from this man would be in an action where a jury awards such compensation in damages as they think a just retribution. But you could not support such a proceeding, in the case before us. You have no grounds for an action. There is no pun-

ishment which can touch this fellow; it does not come within the notice of the law. And what I speak of as fortunate in the ignorance of this Sutton with regard to the law is, that he has the power of bringing an action against this lady, for false imprisonment, *i.e.*, in having sent him to the station-house last night."

Mrs. Durett shuddered and turned very pale at this announcement, and exclaimed eagerly—

"Oh! sir, what can you mean? What an odd thing the law is; it is so difficult to understand. I thought I was quite right in what I did; I am sure I intended to act for the best, sir. How can such a terrible thing be avoided? How shall I possibly escape? And after all, then, poor Miss Boulton will have to be brought into a law court?"

"No, madam, there is little probability of that now. This fellow may end his days without ever becoming more enlightened on this subject; but, should he discover his power, he could proceed without Miss Boulton's assistance; or it would not be difficult to silence him. You have only to give him the one hundred pounds, which you have already suggested that he should pay to Mr. Boulton, or you may give him less; and, from his being only a mechanic, he is not likely to refuse such a douceur to keep him quiet."

Mrs. Durett entertained a very great dread of lawyers, particularly when they talked in a professional tone; and Mr. Boulton's friend having suggested the idea of her being liable to an action almost overcame her, until the hope of being able to bribe Mr. Sutton was proposed, when she again breathed freely. It was evident that this gentleman was a lawyer, and employed purposely in that capacity for the satisfaction of Mr. Boulton, and perhaps it was better, she thought, to have a correct view on so important and incomprehensible a subject. Without this, what dangers she might have encountered, although she had, until this gentleman had given his opinion, thought her own diplomacy unrivalled in wisdom and discretion.

The conversation then turned on the question—how an acquaintance could have increased to such an intimacy between a pupil of Mrs. Durett's and such a low man as Sutton? Of this the governess knew nothing; but Mr. Boulton said, that Emma had owned to having been in the habit of walking out frequently with one of the teachers, Miss Percivale, when

this Sutton had usually joined them, and that by this means the intimacy had been matured. He also said that it was with the utmost reluctance that Emma could be induced to speak on the subject, and especially so when any reference was made to the share which Miss Percivale had taken in the affair, and that she sobbed so violently when this was alluded to, that for the present they did not intend to press her to a further explanation. And he concluded by expressing to Mrs. Durett his wish that she would immediately examine her teacher, and elicit from her what she could, in the hope that something might be disclosed which in some degree would exonerate his poor thoughtless child. Mrs. Durett spoke with the deepest sorrow and contrition that such an accident should have occurred in her establishment, where she averred, "that every care and precaution which could contribute to the safety, comfort, and welfare of her young pupils had been taken by herself *personally*, and especially dwelt on her disappointment that such a sweet girl as Miss Boulton had always appeared to be, should have been led so far from her duty, and have become involved in so sad an affair." She then took her leave of the gentlemen and returned home, worn out with fatigue, fasting, and anxiety. She had never in her life before executed so complete a morning's work; and, although her own plans had not entirely been acted upon, as she had purposed, yet she could not avoid congratulating herself in no small degree on her own tact and energy, and on the complete success with which her labours had been attended.

That Mr. Sutton would know nothing of what had passed at the Albany, nor of the lawyer's opinion, and would still consider himself bound to her, and to the promise of secrecy she had received from him, by gratitude for her supposed benevolence, she felt quite convinced; but with regard to Miss Percivale she was greatly puzzled. That she had taken an active part in this transaction she could not doubt; but how, or to what extent, it was impossible for her to guess. Her composure in the morning, when told of Miss Boulton's attempt at elopement—her recognition of, and pleasure on seeing Mr. Sutton, who appeared to be an acquaintance—her agitation on being told that he was the person who endeavoured to run away with her pupil, was altogether a riddle beyond her capacity to solve, without

further investigation, and she therefore decided on a cross-examination of Miss Percivale, as soon as she had recovered herself a little from the effects of this harassing and fatiguing expedition.

After she had dined she rang the bell, and desired the servant to request Miss Percivale to attend her. After one quarter of an hour had elapsed, and the lady had not made her appearance, Mrs. Durett again rang the bell, when the housekeeper answered it, and said that the head-teacher could nowhere be found.

She had returned in the carriage, and after having taken a glass of wine, said that she was quite well, although Mrs. Claridge could not help thinking that she still looked very pale and ill. The search was now prosecuted with greater strictness, and it was soon discovered that all her possessions of desk, work-box, clothes, books, everything were removed from the house.

The cause of her absconding was very apparent to Mrs. Durett. She saw that Miss Percivale, fearful of detection as to the share she had taken in the clandestine love affair, and not wishing to be questioned, had left the house secretly and at once, and by this means she had escaped exposure, and only anticipated the natural result of such conduct, her dismissal from Forester House.

It may be right to notice that with all Mr. Sutton's faults and follies, he was not otherwise than a good and considerate son. He had therefore on leaving Brompton, prepared a note to his mother, which she would receive early on the following morning, stating to her that he was unavoidably detained—that he was quite safe and well, and as it was uncertain when he should see her next, it should not be long before he would write to her again more fully. This answered as well now that he was in the station-house, as if he had been on the road to Gretna, and satisfied poor Mrs. Sutton sufficiently that her "dear Alfred" had met with no unforeseen accident, and although his note excited her curiosity in no slight degree, it was not so great as to prevent the old lady from making her usually hearty breakfast.

CHAPTER XI.

Several weeks had elapsed, and Mary Wilmot had not yet returned to school, nor had Harriette heard anything respecting her since she received the note in the holidays, and she was in vain looking for the arrival of her friend, when she overheard Miss Crossman tell Mademoiselle Clarisse that Mrs. Durett had heard from Mrs. Wilmot of the sudden death of her uncle, and that her daughter would not be able to return to school for a few weeks, but that at the end of that time she should be at Forester House to resume her duties and her studies.

For a long time, however, previous to the arrival of this intelligence, it had been generally whispered among the young ladies, her fellow-pupils, that Miss Wilmot would certainly *never* come among them again. School rumours are surely very unaccountable and extraordinary things, and so are all other kinds of rumours, for they generally possess some degree of truth, and not unfrequently the prophetic part is fulfilled, although no one seems to be able to say from whence the foundation of the report sprung. And those frequently who are most nearly interested in the subject of the *on dit*, are the only persons who appear totally ignorant of what is going on, and whom the busy tongue of gossip last visits. Thus we often hear that some young lady and gentleman, who entertain a most decided *tendresse* for each other, are engaged, and on the point of being espoused, when the parties themselves have not yet thought or heard anything of such a circumstance, and the report is not very long in general circulation, before the event really takes place, or is in a fair way of doing so shortly.

One is therefore almost tempted to imagine, that as the air is said to be filled with the germs and ova of vegetable

and animal life, so the Fates may perhaps occasionally amuse themselves, by scattering around us imperceptible globules of coming events, and that one of these particles inhaled through the nostril, and taking up its position in the brain, springs into vitality, and grows rapidly into a fine healthy conviction.


It was certainly believed by all Miss Wilmot's former companions, that she would never again return to school, and yet Miss Wilmot was not aware of this fact herself, nor did any of her family or friends dream of such a thing; and yet, on the best authority, we can affirm that Mary never did make her appearance again at Forester House, in the capacity of pupil. We hope, therefore, that this may be considered as sufficient grounds for substantiating the theory of prophetic globules.

It was almost a pity that she should not have returned after the removal of the narrow-minded, ill-natured Miss Percivale, to have experienced the kind and lenient administration of the gentle Mademoiselle Clarisse, who was now raised to the high office of "Vice-President of the Board of Control."

We shall for the present take leave of Forester House and its fair inhabitants, for the purpose of following Mrs. Wilmot and her daughter on their journey westward, as well as to retrace a portion of the early life of the former, and to give a slight sketch of her uncle, Mr. Leighton, his residence, and family history.

The travellers, after leaving Charlton, proceeded by coach on their route into Dorsetshire. At what hour they started, or whether they slept on the road, or at what hour they reached the small seaport town of C—, is matter of little consequence to this history. Suffice it to state, that without accident, or occurrence worthy of record, between the hours of four and five in the afternoon, the coach drew up at the inn where they were to be set down, and that they there alighted.

It was early in the month of January; the day had declined, and it was becoming dusk; a cold drizzling rain was driven almost horizontally from the ocean by a strong south-easterly wind, bringing with it, not the fresh invigorating seabreeze, but a heavy unpleasant odour of decayed seaweeds.



The ladies alighted from the coach with crumpled dress and jaded looks, cramped with fatigue and cold, and feeling dusty in spite of the rain that was now falling. Mrs. Wilmot, full of maternal fuss and business, was bustling to and fro, plying her daughter, who stood patiently in the doorway of the house, with sundry shawls, baskets, and small paper parcels, in order that her hands might be at liberty to seek in her pockets for the half crown and the shilling wherewith to answer the demands of the guard and coachman. She had also to engage some one to take charge of the small trunk which contained all the wardrobe they had deemed it necessary to bring with them, excepting Mrs. Wilmot's best caps, which were in a small bandbox by themselves, and as she could not entrust the charge of this valuable property to any one, it had travelled on her lap during the journey, and was for the present placed on the ground at Mary's feet, until the owner was ready to resume possession of it herself.

Duncombe House was situated at the distance of nearly a mile from the inn at which they were now standing. Mrs. Wilmot did not wish to add to the necessary expenses of their journey by hiring a chaise, and she had therefore come to an agreement with her daughter, that it would be better for them to walk; and a porter was in the act of conveying the luggage to his truck, when an old-fashioned yellow chariot dragged slowly up the steep acclivity, and stopping at the inn door, the footman asked in a loud voice—

"Are there any ladies come by the London coach for Duncombe House?" Mrs. Wilmot might have been a little disconcerted at this manner of inquiring for her, which was done with no more apparent respect than if she had been a brown paper parcel, or a basket of fish, yet she was too much pleased at being spared a long, dreary walk, in the dark and the rain, to be over-fastidious as to the manner in which this intimation was given. She advanced towards the servant, saying, that she and her daughter were "for Duncombe House," and was on the point of inquiring after her uncle's state of health, when, raising her eyes to the coach-box, she recognised the features of one whom she well remembered to have been in the service of her grandfather.

This was William, who, when she was a child and first came to England an orphan, was then a valued servant of

Mr. Leighton's, with whom he had lived for many years; she was therefore not a little surprised at finding him at the age of seventy still holding the same office in the service of the son of his late master. Mrs. Wilmot felt great pleasure in meeting again with this old, though humble friend, one who during her childhood had contributed very much to her amusements. It was William who made her bow, arrows, and target, and taught her to shoot, and who had supplied her with a delicate spade, rake, and hoe for working in her little flower-garden. These were favours not easily to be forgotten, and experienced at an age when kindness makes a deep impression, they were long remembered; she therefore went forward to speak to him; but poor old William was grown very deaf, so that he did not hear what was said, yet seeing that a lady was speaking to him, he descended from his exalted position. He had not been told who it was that the carriage was to fetch, or notwithstanding his infirmities, he would perhaps have endangered life or limb in an attempt at greater alacrity, had he known that after so many years he would have had the pleasure of meeting his "dear Miss Lucy," who had been the favourite of all the inhabitants of Duncombe, whether of gentle or simple grade.

"How do you do, William? I suppose you do not recollect me?" said Mrs. Wilmot, in a tolerably loud voice.

Inclining his head, and putting his hand to his best ear, William replied, "I beg your pardon, ma'am, I can't hear; try this side if you please, ma'am."

"How do you do, William?" repeated Mrs. Wilmot, in a louder voice; "I suppose you do not recollect me?"

"No, ma'am, I can't say precisely as I do," but he seized the extended hand of his quondam though unknown friend.

By this time the host, hostess, chambermaids, porters, guard, coachman, and passengers, were all engaged and open-mouthed in watching this interesting recognition. Mrs. Wilmot began heartily to wish that she had deferred speaking to him until they had reached the privacy of her uncle's grounds, and poor Mary, as might have been supposed, was still more distressed than her mother, at the publicity of this scene, and anxiously wished it at an end, but to little purpose, for the old man's interest once excited, he would not be satisfied until it was all made clear to his comprehension.

"Do you not re-mem-ber Miss Lu-cy Leigh-ton?"

"Anan," said William; "I can't hear, ma'am; sorry to trouble you so."

"Do you not re-mem-ber Miss Lu-cy Leigh-ton?" reiterated the lady in a louder tone.

"I begs pardon, ma'am, you seem to be a friend, will it please you to say it again into this ear," and he turned the other side of his head.

"Do you not re-col-lect Miss Lu-cy Leigh-ton?"

"Yes, ma'am; what of her?"

"I am Mrs. Wilmot, who was Lucy Leighton before I was married."

"Bless my life, my dear, dear miss, to be sure I do, bless ye!" and the old man again shook her hand, but more heartily than on the former occasion.

"But let me see, Miss Lucy, it ain't much like Miss Lucy, nather—but to be sure—let me see, it must be nigh upon twenty years since I see'd you, and time will change us all; I dare say, miss, I'm changed, I've got gray hairs you see, or rather white I should say, but you, miss, bears your years uncommon well. You must be near upon forty. But, miss, I ben't so much changed as my poor master, and yet he's five or six years younger nor me. Lor' love ye, he's sadly altered. Pity you did not come to him before. But he'll be glad to see ye, miss, for all that; he does nothing but talk of ye. My dame, too, will be as glad to see ye again, as any of us—she's still housekeeper—but her place may be called a *sinesure* now, for there's others that choose to manage, and there is not the cheer and visiting kept up, as used to be, when you knowed us, in our good old master's time. But ye'll see how it all is now, miss—ma'am, I begs your pardon, I must not call ye miss, though I was aye used to it once; but I quite forgets my 'haviour, I am so rejoiced to see ye again."

William next asked, if any of Mrs. Wilmot's family were with her; when she called to her reluctant daughter, who approached but slowly to the scene of action, unwilling to make one of a party which was exciting the attention of so many strangers. He was greatly delighted, apparently, at recognizing in Mary, a perfect resemblance of what her mother had been, at the time he last saw her. The colloquy that followed was carried on, as far as old William was con-

cerned, all on one side, for the gentle responses of his young friend, who could not persuade herself to speak at the highest pitch of her voice, as her mother had done, were perfectly inaudible to the auricular organs of this venerable old coachman. He asked permission to shake hands with her, which being granted with apparent great good humour by the young lady herself, the interview concluded.

William dragged himself with some difficulty to his elevated position on the coach-box; the trunk having been deposited in the carriage, and Mrs. Wilmot having resumed the possession of her invaluable bandbox, stepped in after it with her daughter, and they drove slowly down the hill, and taking the road on the left hand, before reaching the bridge, pursued their way towards the pretty rustic village of Woodland, in which direction stood the residence of Mr. Herbert Leighton.

It was nearly twenty years since Mrs. Wilmot had last been in this home of her childhood and youth; for since her marriage she had never visited, nor held any intercourse with her uncle Herbert, who at the death of her grandfather, the late Mr. Leighton, (which event happened shortly after she had quitted the neighbourhood) had come into the possession of the property of Duncombe.

Frederick Leighton, Mrs. Wilmot's father, was one of two sons, of whom Herbert was the elder. Frederick having only a younger brother's portion, and being of an enthusiastic and active disposition, had made choice of the profession of arms, as the one best suited to the gratification of a somewhat restless and ambitious character. At an early age he formed a union with a young lady of exquisite beauty, and many other interesting qualities, but without sufficient fortune to sanction, in the eyes of his friends, the propriety of an attachment, and his marriage was consequently a subject of great dissatisfaction to his family. The parties, however, most interested in the arrangement were very happy in each other's love, and on being ordered abroad, his young wife left England to share with him the fortunes and vicissitudes of a soldier's life; and to contribute, as far as lay in her power, to his comfort and happiness.

They had been married but a few years, and had one little girl, the present Mrs. Wilmot, when the regiment to which Mr. Frederick Leighton belonged was sent on service to

one of the English settlements on the western coast of Africa. He there, shortly after, fell a victim to the terrible ravages of that perilous climate, and in the assiduity with which his lovely and devoted wife attended on the heart-rending duties of his death-bed, she also caught the fever, and within three days of her husband's decease she died, and the same grave received them both.

Lucy, their only child, had been sent to a distance from this fatal scene on the first appearance of alarm. She was then little more than four years of age, and by the directions of a brother-officer, and intimate friend of her father's, she was despatched immediately after the death of her parents to England, under the care of her nurse, and consigned to the charge of her grandfather. Mr. Leighton, although at this period a widower, gladly received little Lucy at Duncombe, the interesting and only pledge left to him of his beloved and departed son. As she was a "bonny winsome wee thing," and thrown an orphan on the bounty and kindness of others, she soon became an object of great affection and interest, both with her grandfather, and all around her. With her uncle Herbert also, Lucy, as she grew older became a great favourite, until when, in her twentieth year, he discovered that she entertained a preference for the attentions of a young officer in the neighbourhood, of the name of Wilmot.

This gentleman was of respectable family and connexions, but was unfortunately not possessed of sufficient fortune or standing in the county to meet the views of the proud and affluent heir of Duncombe, and who, with a long line of ancestry, considered also that a pedigree was a necessary appendage to any young aspirant who should seek for the honour of his niece's hand. He therefore told Lucy, that she ought to look higher for a fitting husband, than to the son, as he termed it, of a "parvenu squire, whose parentage, only three generations back, was lost in the cellars of the petty traders or general merchants of his family, amid the coal, pitch, tar, twine, and tallow, from whence their consequence had been derived."

When Mr. Wilmot's maiden aunt sifted out through the medium of the Duncombe housekeeper, that the want of ancestry was the chief cause of Mr. Herbert's objection to

the marriage of Miss Leighton with her nephew, she became extremely indignant, and was heard to say—

“That for her part, she did not see the use of having so many grandfathers and grandmothers, or why one man should think himself better than another, because he happened to have more. That for the matter of their boasted valour, merit, or talent, she did not see but that a distinguished living grandson was a better thing than a distinguished dead grandfather, unless it was to antiquarians, who were known to like things the better for being dusty and old; and that this love of ancestry was, she supposed, the cause of that singular restriction, which she had always before thought so extraordinary and unnecessary, ‘that a man may not marry his grandmother,’ of which she now could understand the use.” And finally she observed, with a slight toss of the head, and a protrusion of the under lip, “that this taste for old things never seemed to extend itself to elderly maiden aunts, and that marriage was certainly a very wonderful sort of a thing, that it could throw a charm over a great great grandmother, while it refused it to them.”

Mr. Herbert Leighton undertook the fruitless task of expostulating with Lucy, and his ill success greatly annoyed and angered him. He found her more obstinate and pertinacious to the claims of a first-love, than he had anticipated. He had recourse to entreaties, and even bribes; and at length, having worked himself up into a “towering rage,” he threatened her that if she persisted in keeping to this wilful and illjudged engagement, that his lasting displeasure should be the consequence; that nothing should ever induce him to forgive her; that it had been his intention to make her his heiress, as he probably should never marry, but that if she ever became the wife of the detested Wilmot, he should seek for a successor to the valuable property among the more distant relatives of his mother.

Her uncle's violence and anger frightened poor Lucy into a violent fit of crying, but it effected nothing towards shaking her determination of abiding to her plighted troth, which had been given under the sanction of her grandfather. She therefore agreed with the sentiment of the old Scotch ballad, that she would not accept the high bribes offered by her uncle—

"Gin he whose faith is pledged wi' mine,
Is wranged, and grieving sair."

Had Mr. Herbert Leighton urged on his niece any stronger motives, or what might have been considered a reasonable objection, against her excellent Edward, than his having a stunted genealogical *shrub* instead of a flourishing tree; had he adduced anything against the respectability or worthiness of Edward, we hope that she would have listened to him, for a highly toned mind cannot love what is unworthy. We naturally seek for something in a character resembling ourselves, and a certain degree of similarity in essential points, is necessary to our happiness, as well as to the due exercise of our social duties; and if we are well-disposed ourselves, we shall cling most fondly to him, whose intrinsic merits can the most exalt and dignify our attachment. Women should be particularly cautious as to whom they select as the objects of their affection, because from the pliability of their dispositions, and the readiness with which they can adapt themselves to those whom they wish to please, they must necessarily rise or fall in the scale of mental excellence, in proportion to the deservedness or undeservedness of him who engages their esteem or affection.

Too frequently, however, we hear of some young lady, from an amiable singleness of heart, meeting with a youth possessed of no other merit than that attractive qualification of esteeming her; and who, feeling her influence over him, accepts his overtures in the delusive yet virtuous hope that she may wield her power for his good, and bring him to a better state of feeling and conduct. But of all dangerous speculations this appears the most hazardous; for she is far more likely to be injured by such a union than he to be improved by it. For, with this man, the lady-wife will probably not hold the same extensive sway as the lady-love had done, and what will be her condition, on finding herself for life the ill-assorted companion of a worthless and unprincipled husband? If such should be her amiable motive, let her at any rate delay the irretrievable step until she has reason to be convinced, that the good she has aimed to effect has produced more than a superficial and evanescent reform.

Lucy Leighton knew that her devoted Edward was "sans

peur et sans reproche:" that he was greatly beloved by those who knew him best, and was admired by all the belles in the vicinity, which latter is a subject of no small consideration with young ladies: he loved her, was handsome, graceful, and an officer! and what female heart could wish for more?

To her warm and romantic imagination he was not to be relinquished for such paltry considerations as her uncle had advanced. She felt she should be happier even in a cottage with Edward than in a palace with one whom she could not love so well. The match could not be considered imprudent, for, in addition to Mr. Wilmot's property, she had five thousand pounds which her grandfather had settled on her, and this would give them an income of four hundred a-year, which would be as much as their unambitious hearts could desire.

She could not, indeed, foresee that Mr. Wilmot would have been so slow in obtaining his promotion, or that she was fated to have the alarming family of nine children; but had a second sight afforded her a view of these events, she might, indeed, have felt a little appalled; yet it would be difficult to say whether it would have affected her so deeply as to have led her to change her mind and yield to her uncle's entreaties.

It is true that she had possessed no carriages nor horses, and few servants since she had quitted her grandfather's house, and she had striven against many and great difficulties at times, but, throughout her married life, she had been as happy a wife and mother as ever concentrated the energies of heart and soul within the hallowed precincts of domestic duties and interests; and she considered her trouble and exertions as more than repaid by the gratitude and affection with which her husband and children had ever regarded her. "Life," she was wont to say, "must have its cares and pains as well as its pleasures, but heaven grant me that lot which shall most interest and exalt my affections, and tend most towards turning them aright, and let the cold and selfish take to themselves their fill of ease, of station, power, or wealth."

Lucy, having enlisted her kind grandpapa on her side, and having bid defiance to the ill-judged displeasure of her

uncle, continued to receive the attentions of Mr. Wilmot whenever they had an opportunity of meeting.

Mr. Herbert Leighton at this time went to travel on the continent, and left the house without taking leave of his "self-willed" niece. Poor Lucy wept a torrent of tears at this unkindness, but the good nature of Mr. Leighton, and the assiduous attentions of her lover, who now became a daily visitor at the house, helped her speedily to forget this grief. The happiness of these interviews between the young people was greatly enhanced by the absence of Mr. Herbert, as nothing was now to be feared from his animadversions or interference. Indeed, old Mr. Leighton every day found some new merit in his intended grandson, whose filial solicitude and attention to his comfort won largely on his affection; and he was heard to declare that "the day when he should resign his dear girl to the guardianship of so worthy a young man as Wilmot would be one of the happiest of his life." The event was hastened, by the old gentleman's wish, and, two months after Mr. Herbert's departure, the parties were united in the romantic little parish church of Woodland.

A few months only after this marriage Mr. Leighton was seized with an illness of a very alarming nature. The account of his father's dangerous state reaching Mr. Herbert, while pursuing his travels in Italy, caused his immediate return to England. Of the event of her grandfather's death, which happened shortly after, Mrs. Wilmot only received information through the medium of a friend, whom her uncle had employed to convey to her the melancholy intelligence.

Mrs. Wilmot had written to her uncle, on that, and many subsequent occasions, but to no purpose; her letters never received any answer, and it appeared that he had too well kept his rash vow, that he would never notice her as the wife of Mr. Wilmot. She had heard also indirectly that he had adopted a maternal and distant cousin as the heir to his property, and that this gentleman and his wife had latterly spent the greatest part of the year at Duncombe.

CHAPTER XII.

It was therefore, with feelings of a very painful nature, that Mrs. Wilmot now, after the expiration of twenty years, and having during that time experienced so much unmerited unkindness from the present owner, once more returned to visit the happy home of her youth. As the carriage drove on, she endeavoured to divert her mind, by relating to her daughter many little circumstances, which the sight of certain objects on the road recalled to her recollection; which had they not been roused from the vasty deep of by-gone memories, by the magic power of association, had lain for ever dormant and forgotten.

At length they reached the entrance to the grounds. All seemed so changed—so lonely and so desolate! the gates creaked loudly on their rusty hinges, on being opened to admit the carriage, as if complaining at being disturbed after a tranquillity of so many months or years. It was nearly dark, but a crescent moon shone brightly, and showed that the nettles, fern, and hemlock, had encroached their lank stems so much upon the gravel drive, that the road could scarcely be distinguished from the turf. The shrubberies that skirted the lawn looked dank and drear, from the quantity of decayed leaves and grass, which had never been removed from beneath them; the laurels threw out their long, light branches over the path-way, which brushed against the carriage as it passed along.

They drew up at the flight of steps before the house-door, no light was visible in the hall, and no servant appeared in answer to the heavy sound of the bell; the footman, therefore, pushing open the door, entered, and quickly returned with a small candle. Mrs. Wilmot and her daughter alighted, and leaving the trunks in the carriage,

On orders that they should be taken to their apartments, they followed Joseph into the hall.

The small dining parlour was thrown open, and they were ushered into a cold dark room. A fire had been just lighted on the grate, which had been apparently unconscious of one for many months. The sticks were almost consumed, and the coal had not yet lighted, so as to give any warmth, and seemed only a mockery of the chilliness around. Joseph set down the candle, with the air of one half-ashamed of the exception now given to his master's niece, and said,

"I was bid, ma'am, to show you into this room. It looks very dreary, but I'll let Mr. and Mrs. Sanford know that you are here—they always sit in the library."

"Oh, mamma!" said Mary, as soon as the servant had quitted them, "how wretched it looks, shall we not follow him into the library? I hope you are not so cold as I am."

"I am rather cold my dear, but no, we will wait here, and see what will be done with us next. I never dreamt of their being here, and yet I ought to have known that it was most probable." While she was speaking, a little old woman, a very picture of an old-fashioned head-servant, entered at the further end of the room. She was habited in a gown of some dark material, a close, crimped, muslin mob-cap, surrounded her sharpened features, her white hair was cropped, if it may so be termed, in a straight line across her forehead; a muslin neck-kerchief was pinned outside the dress, before and behind, and a muslin apron of thicker texture, and of spacious dimensions confined in perfect order the neatly laid plaits in front, and all was of the most perfect whiteness. She advanced stealthily towards Mrs. Wilmot, occasionally looking behind her, and eagerly taking her hand, said in a half-whisper—

"Oh! dear, dear Mrs. Wilmot, I am so glad to see you. Oh, dear!—but hush! don't you say you've seen me—no, if you love me, ma'am, but only when master sends word for you to go to him, don't delay a minute, for anyone's persuading, but follow directly. There's something wrong, mind, not a word about me, ma'am. Oh! my poor master, he cannot live many hours, God bless his soul, and us too. I shall see you again by and by, when I can say more," and she slipped out of the room again as cautiously as she had entered it.

"Who is that, mamma?" whispered Mary.

"The housekeeper, my love, Bidwell, she is William's wife—I am so agitated, I hardly know what to think; did I ask for my poor uncle? I fear—very much, and I hardly can say what—I hope he has not cherished any unkind feelings towards me to the very last; how very strange is her behaviour!"

Mrs. Sanford now entered, she made a low curtsy to both the ladies. "Will you not take a seat, ma'am? Mrs. Wilmot, I believe."

This salutation being returned in the same formal manner in which it was given, Mrs. Sanford continued,

"I have ordered a tray of refreshments for you, it will be here presently; Mr. Sanford will wait on you shortly, but he is engaged at this moment with Mr. Leighton."

"My uncle, how is he?"

"Oh, weak—very weak. Mr. Ridgood, his medical attendant, wishes him to be kept perfectly tranquil; I believe Mr. Leighton has expressed a wish to see you to-night, if you came; but we think it would agitate him too much, and be attended with very serious consequences, and therefore Mr. Sanford, by the advice of the doctor, begs that the patient may not be disturbed to-night, and I hope you will see how reasonable this is, and refuse to comply with any such whim, should Mr. Leighton send for you."

"I must be guided by circumstances," replied Mrs. Wilmot, in a tranquil tone, "I have travelled this distance from my home, on my uncle's account, and I should wish to comply with any other request of his."

"Not to his certain injury, I presume, ma'am?"

Mr. Sanford's appearance interrupted any reply to this last observation.

"How d'ye do, Mrs. Wilmot?" said he, in a patronizing tone, presenting his hand with a sidelong inclination of the body, in perfect unison with the feeling indicated by his voice. "How d'ye do? you have had an unpleasant sort of a day for your drive!"

"If it has been so, my mind has been so occupied with weightier subjects, that I have had little time to bestow on the weather. How is my poor uncle?"

"Oh! no occasion for immediate alarm, I should hope; Mr. Ridgood intends administering a gentle soporific, when

he returns at ten, for after a day of pain it is highly desirable, and we hope in the morning he will be more composed, and able to see you without agitation."

Mrs. Wilmot made no reply, and without taking any notice of Mary, who sat shivering near her mother, he continued,

"What a miserable room you have had my cousin shown into, my love! The fact is, that I have been very much occupied with some affairs I had to transact, and I have been sitting this morning in the library, when not engaged with Mr. Leighton, and Mrs. Sanford has been there with me; but the room is so littered, and in such a state of confusion with books and papers, that I thought it would be agreeable to have another apartment prepared for you. Many years, Mrs. Wilmot, since you were last at Duncombe; but I cannot help congratulating you on the happy turn of Mr. Leighton's feelings towards you. He expressed himself most kindly, when speaking of you last week; which induced me to ask him whether I should write and request you to visit us."

"If you please, sir," said Bidwell, who entered with great dignity and importance, very different from the manner in which she had first visited the apartment. "If you please, sir, my master wishes to see Mrs. Wilmot immediately. How do you do, ma'am," with a respectful curtsy to that lady, "I am happy to see you down here again, ma'am. My master waits, shall I show you to his room, ma'am."

Mrs. Wilmot rose, and crossed the room to follow the housekeeper. Mr. Sanford was on his knees upon the hearth-rug, in which attitude he was endeavouring to persuade the fire to look a little more cheerful, by placing the pieces of coal in such positions as were best calculated to make them ignite. He was also led to make this condescending use of his talents, by a feeling that any trifling employment, would help him through what might be otherwise an awkward interview, and fill up any unpleasant, unsatisfactory gaps, which might occur in what he intended to be an easy flowing conversation; but on perceiving Mrs. Wilmot's movements, he started from his position, and putting himself between her and the door, exclaimed in a tone, not quite so dulcet and polite, as the one he had hitherto adopted—

"For heaven's sake, madam, after all I have said, would you to gratify his request, risk your uncle's life?"

A look from Bidwell would have confirmed Mrs. Wilmot's mind, had it wavered at all, and now encouraged her to proceed with "gentle, yet prevailing force," saying at the same time, in a mild voice—

"His seeing me cannot agitate my dear uncle so much, I should think, as any apparent unwillingness or hesitation on my part to attend his summons; and if he is so very weak and ill, the risk of a few hours delay may be fatal to my peace, as well as to his. Give me leave."

This was uttered in so decisive, yet gentle a tone, that Mr. Sanford, who on other occasions was accustomed to play the bully, shrunk from this new kind of influence, and stepping out of the way, added with a smile of much bitterness and scorn,

"Very well—oh, yea, certainly, do as you please—but you must take the consequences if anything occurs, ma'am."

Mrs. Wilmot quitted the room, and under the guidance of the faithful old servant, proceeded to the chamber occupied by the invalid. This lay in a remote part of the large old-fashioned house, for in accordance with a singular whim of Mr. Leighton's, he had been led to select for himself the most dreary, and out-of-the-way room on the premises. After traversing a series of halls and passages on the ground-floor, they ascended a back-staircase, which seemed as if it never would cease its windings; and then passing through anterooms and galleries without number, varied by the incessant alternations of two or three steps up, and then two or three steps down, as if placed there only to add to the difficulties of the route, or perhaps for the amusement of children, as it in some degree reminds one of the Montagnes Russes, they reached the apartment of the dying man.

It was a moderate sized oak room; long, heavy, dark coloured curtains were drawn over the one spacious window that faced the door, by which they now entered. A bed furnished with the same gloomy material as the window curtains stood on the right hand. This was no modern fabric, the bedstead being extremely low, and the canopy raised extremely high, while the long, gaunt posts seemed as if rendered more slender than they were, by the continual effort

of stretching up in pursuit of the top of the bed, which covered with festoons, tassels, and cornices, and every rich decoration, appeared to have removed itself as far as possible from its less worthy base; and like the crown imperial lily, which in fancied superiority, rises majestically above its parent plant, as though disdaining any connexion with that which is less beautiful than itself. The curtain of the bed on the side next the door, was drawn more than half-way down, but on the further side it was left open to admit the genial warmth and cheerful light of a large fire which blazed freely in a spacious, open grate at the end of the room.

Bidwell desired Mrs. Wilmot to remain out of sight a moment, while she went round to speak to her master, who lay with his face averted from them, and turned towards the fire.

"If you please, sir," said she, leaning over the bed, "Mrs. Wilmot is come, shall I ask her to walk up?"

"Yes, yes, to be sure, don't let her wait down stairs."

A sign from Bidwell caused Mrs. Wilmot to approach, who falling on her knees beside her uncle, and pressing his thin, emaciated hand to her lips, exclaimed—

"Yes, dear sir, dear uncle Herbert, I am here."

"Bless you, bless you, my dear Lucy, I have used you very ill, very unkindly. But you should have come sooner," said Mr. Leighton, in a feeble voice. "I feel drowsy; sit by me here, for a few minutes. I can sleep now you are come; don't let go my hand. I will speak to you presently," and as he closed his eyes large tears gushed from beneath their lids.

"What can be done? he has fainted," whispered Mrs. Wilmot to the housekeeper.

"Oh, ma'am, he's gone! It was too much for him; oh, it is death!"

"No, don't be alarmed, Bidwell, it is only a fainting fit; his pulse beats yet. Is the doctor here?"

"No, ma'am, he told me an hour since that it was almost over; that medicines could no longer be of service, and, as he could do nothing more, he would not wait, but would call again at ten."

"Have you any cordial that I can give my uncle? if that is the doctor's opinion we can do no harm."

Under Mrs. Wilmot's directions, some spiced wine was

quickly prepared, and given, while she, still kneeling at the bedside, continued to chafe his hands and temples.

What a change had been wrought in her uncle's frame since she had last seen him ! All the tenderness and love of early days returned to her heart as she contemplated the wasted form, the pallid, death-like hue spread over features which, when she had last looked on them, possessed all the animation and fine contour of a handsome man in the prime of life.

The cordial had its desired effect ; Mr. Leighton revived, breathed freely, and at length fell into a light, though transient slumber. He woke refreshed from this, and, with his niece's hand still clasped within his own, said—

"Have I dreamed it, or are you there, my dear Lucy?"

"Yes, sir ; I hope you feel better for your sleep."

"Yes, thank you, my love ; but I must not sleep any longer. I have a great, great deal to say to you, and I feel I shall not long have time allowed me. Raise me in the bed, Bidwell. I am very weak, but I shall feel less feeble when I am a little more upright."

This being done, the invalid seemed to have gained fresh power, and spoke with a stronger voice.

"Lucy, tell me why you did not come to me before ? I know I was most unjust and unkind to you ; but, my love, how awful is the condition on which we are bound to forgive one another the greatest injuries."

"Sir, I left home the same day that I received the information that you were ill, and had expressed a wish to see me."

"When ? I suppose you mean the last letter, which was sent four days since."

"Yes, sir, I have received no other."

"No other ? about my illness, you would say ? I do not know how that can be. Sanford has often written to you at my request ; and he tells me the last letter is the only one you have acknowledged, either by writing or coming to me as I greatly wished. I think he wrote five times by my particular desire since I have been confined to this room."

"Indeed, sir, I have never heard anything of or from you since I married."

"Come, Lucy, you must forget. I have written to you myself such letters as nothing but your resentment could have led you to neglect. Many, within the last few years,

and I have been very angry with you at times, as Sanford knows. But a dying man must forgive all. I own I did very wrong for many years, but for full the latter half of the period, since I last saw you, I have been endeavouring to make reparation for my fault, by writing you several letters, although I never received any answer to them from you."

"Indeed, my dear uncle, I have never seen a single line from you."

"How can this be," said the poor invalid, trembling with agitation; "no letters from me, nor message through Sanford until last week."

Bidwell's suspicions were somewhat confirmed by this conversation, and hearing some one approaching the room, she went out, and turning the lock of the door on the outside, and putting the key in her pocket, proceeded down the gallery. She there met Mr. Sanford, who asked if Mrs. Wilmot was still in Mr. Leighton's room. She replied in the affirmative, and added that her master had fainted, that she could not hope that he would live much longer, and advised him to "fetch up" Mrs. Sandford and Miss Mary, while she went to speak to the servants.

While Mr. Sanford followed this advice, and went to seek his wife, Bidwell bustled off in another direction to the servants' hall. Here she found them all assembled, talking very fast, and giving evident signs of a mutinous feeling towards the authority of the Sanfords. The conversation ran thus—

"To think of their daring to put seals on all the cupboards and drawers in the house this morning, as if they thought us thieves, or thought Mrs. and Miss Wilmot so," said one.

"And think of her having ordered in all the mourning for themselves and the family, and to be making her own as she is now. It's a downright shame—killing my poor master before his time in this way," added another.

"Oh," said a third, which was old William, "they don't care much about our good master, I fancy; 'tis the money they've been after all along."

"And they are so mean they don't deserve any. They turn off their own servants and come and live here and employ us, and never give us a farthing; and I think it's a shame of them to receive master's own niece and the young

lady in that shabby way. Why, if they had been servants, we should have had them into the hall and warmed them, and given them something comfortable to eat."

"Oh! it went to my heart to show such well-spoken ladies into that room, without ever a fire or candle in it," said Joseph.

"Yes, but," says William, "the shame is that Mrs. Wilmot, the dear young lady that was brought up a child here, and as sweet a dear as you ever saw, when she came amongst us first—a poor little fatherless, motherless dear—that she should be set aside from what's her own by inheritance, only 'cause Mr. Herbert was angry at her liking of a nice, kind-hearted young gentlemen; and this Sanford, that nobody knows nor cares about, set here in her stead, to lord it over us. I and my dame will be off as soon as it's all over. I'll never stay to see any but the lawful owner in this place."

Bidwell made her appearance in time to hear this eloquent harangue of her spouse; and, when he ceased speaking, she told of what had passed up-stairs between her master and Mrs. Wilmot. When she hinted her suspicion that Mr. Sanford knew something of the letters which had been intercepted, a groan of disapprobation followed the suggestion, all agreed that it was probable, and the old servants, who had known Miss Lucy formerly, were violent in their displeasure that such a "dear sweet creature should be so served," if such should really be the case.

"I can put it all right," said Joseph, advancing into the midst of them, "I don't care what happens to me, or what you may all say of me. I've been very wicked, but I'll tell it all, cost what it will; I'll make a clean breast. I never knew nor cared anything about Mrs. Wilmot till now that you all speak so handsomely of her, nor did I know till now that I had been injuring of anybody. But Mr. Sanford, when he first was about here so much, told me that he'd give me a sovereign for every letter that I would take to him directed to Mrs. Wilmot, or that came here with the name of Lucy on the seal, for I always have had the carrying and fetching the letters to and from the post office. So, like a wicked good-for-nothing fellow, I've always done so, and I'll tell him so to his face. But a sovereign was a good deal to a poor fellow like me, and yet I never could bring myself to

spend a farthing of it. So I'll carry it all up to my master, and tell him the whole. Mr. Sanford, I see now, was afraid of master and Mrs. Wilmot coming to an understanding, lest it should be anything out of his pocket."

Accordingly, after the sensation which Joseph's confession had excited, was in some degree subsided, Bidwell undertook to escort him to his master's apartment, and the others were desired to follow into the room, but not to come in sight, unless their master inquired for them.

Mr. Leighton and Mrs. Wilmot had still continued their conversation, and were neither of them without some doubt as to whether it was possible that, from interested motives, Mr. Sanford might not have taken measures to prevent a reconciliation between the uncle and his niece.

Mr. Leighton heard Joseph's story with more firmness than might have been expected, from one in so weakened a state; for under any circumstances, and at any age, it is a severe trial to be disappointed in our estimate of the character of one whom we have liked, or on whom we have reposed confidence.

Mr. Sanford came into the room soon after Joseph had ceased speaking, and advancing towards the bed-side, with the same obsequious tenderness of manner as usual, congratulated Mr. Leighton on his appearing so much revived. Mr. Leighton, in reply, asked whether he remembered his having given him a letter to take to town for Mrs. Wilmot; when Mr. Sanford changed countenance slightly, but immediately rallied, and replied with ease—

"Oh! yes, perfectly; I was obliged to put it into the post office, not having time to call on Mrs. Wilmot."

"No, sir, if you please," said Joseph, advancing, "my master gave it me to take to your room, when you were packing up for your journey, and you laughed at the 'old joke,' as you called it, flung it into the fire, and gave me a sovereign to hold my tongue."

Mr. Sanford coloured a brilliant crimson, and then turned very pale, yet contrived to say, with some appearance of injured innocence,

"Surely, sir, you do not believe the lies of a rascal like that, in preference to my word? Do you think me capable of such conduct?"

"If you please," said Joseph, laying some money on the

bed beside Mr. Leighton, "here are the nine pounds I have received at different times from Mr. Sanford. I never had the heart to use them, though I did not know the harm I was doing you and Mrs. Wilmot till now. I hope for your forgiveness, sir."

"I was going to have spoken further," resumed Mr. Leighton, "but it is unnecessary. Joseph can have no motive but an honest one for returning this money. This is a sufficient proof; and I am glad he has shown that he has a conscience which will not allow of his using for himself money obtained in so nefarious a manner. My poor fellow, I forgive you. I bless God that I have seen my dear niece once again, as good and kind as ever. I might have died less happy. You, Mr. Sanford, I also forgive, and I am glad to see that you do not attempt to deny the charge brought against you. I sincerely hope that you will repent of this injustice towards me, and I cannot but perceive in this conduct the motive of self-interest which has led you to prevent a reconciliation between me and my nearest relative."

He then beckoned to Bidwell, and told her to give him, out of the bureau which stood in the room, a small japan box. This being done he unlocked it, and removing from thence several papers and small packets, he at length took from the bottom of the box, a larger paper; having opened this deliberately, and looked at it for a moment, he tore it in two parts, and handing it to Bidwell, desired her to put it instantly into the fire; and then watching its blaze for a moment, Mr. Leighton continued—

"Now, sir, I have done you justice, and my dear niece also. But for this wicked scheme of yours, of preventing Mrs. Wilmot, if possible, from deriving even a small benefit at my death, you have forfeited the whole. I had left everything to you, excepting a few trifling legacies to my servants and dependants, and two thousand pounds to my poor injured Lucy; but now you have compelled me to destroy my will. Everything is now her's, as my natural heir. You have been kind to me, though I have not the pleasure now of feeling that you were so disinterestedly. If Mrs. Wilmot likes to give you the two thousand pounds, I had reserved for her, she is at liberty to do so; and the sooner you leave this house the better, for you can have as

little pleasure in remaining, as I can feel in seeing you here. I forgive you."

Mr. Sanford, without uttering a word, rushed from the room, and Mr. Leighton fell back in the bed exhausted and overcome by the exciting nature of this scene, as also by the great exertion he had made. Mrs. Wilmot dismissed the domestics, and having administered another restorative to the nearly fainting patient, she and Bidwell being both tolerably good doctors, had introduced a narcotic in this last cordial, which caused a more profound sleep than the former.

Mrs. Wilmot was persuaded to take some refreshment herself, of which she stood greatly in need, and now being at liberty to quit her uncle's side, for a short time, she went to arrange with Bidwell, the accommodation for herself and her daughter during the night. There was a small room adjoining the one occupied by Mr. Leighton, and in this she desired to have a large fire immediately lighted, which being done, she sent for Mary to attend her; as she did not like to go down stairs again, lest she should confront either Mr. or Mrs. Sanford; which would not have been agreeable to either party.

Mrs. Wilmot learnt from Mary, that she and Mrs. Sanford were in the act of coming to Mr. Leighton's room, at Mr. Sanford's request, when that gentleman met them on the stairs, in a state of evident perturbation. He told his wife that he should not stay another moment in the house, that he was going directly to the town of C—, from whence he would send a chaise for her; and desiring that everything belonging to them might be packed and ready by the time the carriage arrived, he hastened to leave the house; that Mrs. Sanford had been dreadfully alarmed at her husband's manner, and had retired with him in tears to the library, when Mary had returned alone to the desolate parlour, into which they had at first been shown. Mary also said that she was very cold, and very hungry, for that although a tray with some cold meat, bread, and a black bottle, had been brought in after her mother had left them, yet no one had offered to help her, and she was not inclined to partake of fare which was so cheerless and inhospitable.

While the mother and daughter were thus talking, Bidwell had bustled off to provide something more comfortable

for the weary travellers, and presently entered their apartment, followed by a maidservant bringing the apparatus necessary for making tea and coffee, together with such delicacies, of a more substantial nature, as were suited to the appetites of the cold and weary travellers, who had only taken a hurried dinner on the road, at two o'clock. During this meal, and while Mr. Leighton still continued in a tranquil sleep, Bidwell remained in attendance talking to Mrs. Wilmot of all she had to say about her poor master. She then entered on the late scene, of which Mary had not heard, her mother having had too much delicacy herself, at such a time, to speak even to her daughter of her change of circumstances. But when Bidwell offered her humble congratulations, that she would now be restored to what in justice was her own, Mrs. Wilmot stopped her and said:—

"Do not speak of it now. My poor uncle! would that I could have known his kind feelings towards me sooner. I shall not have him long with me, I fear, and I truly pity the Sanfords, though I thank the bounty of heaven, which has provided thus for me and my loved family!" and no longer able to restrain her feelings she wept freely.

"My dear mamma, what is the matter?" said Mary, going to her mother's side.

"My love, our good uncle has altered his will, and left everything to me, and the suddenness of such a change, and the trying scene I have just witnessed, together with my thankfulness that for your dear father's and your sakes, we shall have no longer such difficulties to contend with, as we have experienced hitherto, has perfectly overcome me. I did not intend to have spoken to you on the subject at present, my dear, as I did not feel equal to it, but Bidwell has forestalled me."

"My dear mamma!" exclaimed Mary, throwing herself on her mother's neck, "then I shall not be obliged to remain any longer at school than until Mrs. Durett has procured another half-boarder. Oh! my dear mamma, I am so thankful!" and she burst into tears.

"But why, my love, should that be your chief cause of thankfulness? have you been so unhappy then, and never told me?" replied Mrs. Wilmot, as she raised her daughter's head from her shoulder, and looked anxiously in her face.

"Yes, mamma, rather; but it was wrong of me to say

so now, but it slipped out before I had time to think. I believe I was very silly at school, and felt little annoyances more than I ought to have done, but I will not say any more about it now. I will tell you another time, but I am very glad that I shall never be obliged to leave you again. May I go with you to see Mr. Leighton?"

"Yes, my dear, but you must be prepared to see a sad sight. You have not been accustomed to witness much sickness, or to watch at the bed-side of one who is near his end."

They accordingly stepped into the room, followed by old Bidwell, who had been too long accustomed to seeing her master ill, and in daily expectation of his decease, to feel as acutely as they did. Their patient was still composed in sleep. He breathed so lightly, that it was hardly perceptible to the eye, and there was a feeling of tranquillity and stillness around which made them stand motionless; and as if scarcely able to draw their breath. Mary felt this particularly, and the emaciated features and livid hue of one whose soul was near departing filled her with such an awe as she had never before experienced. Mrs. Wilmot almost felt that he was gone, and that life had fled, while they stood gazing at him. She knelt by the bed-side, inclined her ear towards the dying man; he still breathed; she took his cold, damp hand, the pulse still beat feebly, and yet more feebly. While in this posture of anxiety, Mr. Ridgood approached the room with the noiseless tread which could only bespeak the doctor. He withdrew the curtain on the further side; it was no time for compliment, he bowed his head in silence to the strangers, yet with his eyes still fixed on Mr. Leighton.

"Is it over, ma'am?" said he, lifting the other hand from beneath the clothes, and retaining it while he felt the pulse.

A whisper of "God bless you!" escaped the lips of the dying man, and then added, opening his eyes, "the Lord have mercy on me!" he muttered more, but it was inaudible even to Mrs. Wilmot. He turned his head a little, as if seeking repose, and seemed to have dozed again. For a few minutes he lay in this state; the pulse beat one, two; one, two, three, stopped for a short space, beat again, and then ceased altogether. A look from the medical attendant

confirmed Mrs. Wilmot in her opinion, and throwing her head upon the bed, and clasping with both hands that of her departed uncle she wept in an anguish of tears.

Bidwell immediately led Mary from the room, and the doctor retired. Mary was persuaded to go to rest, and bathed in tears she followed on to an apartment provided for her by the thoughtful little housekeeper, in a more habitable part of the house, and further removed from the chamber of death, than the one selected by her mother for the convenience of watching near Mr. Leighton during the night. Here Mrs. Wilmot joined her, and both mother and daughter endeavoured to seek repose after the fatigues and agitations of that eventful day.

A great deal of distressing business now became the task of poor Mrs. Wilmot; she had no one to consult, or she would have gladly done so. Her husband was abroad, and she had no male relative who could assist her, her sons being yet too young to be of any service. She was, however, accustomed to exertion, and was possessed of judgment and perseverance to contend with any difficulties; and the Sanfords having quitted the house on the previous evening, and having several old and attached servants about her, she determined to arrange everything herself. The preparations for the funeral were all made, and which were executed in a handsome and liberal manner; she wrote at once to Mr. Wilmot to urge his immediate return to England; and she sent for her two sons from Woolwich to attend the funeral of their great uncle; after which ceremony, as it was necessary for her to go to town on business, she left the two boys with Mary at Duncombe, and started for London. After the expiration, however, of three weeks, having disposed of her house at Charlton, and transacted all other necessary affairs, she returned to take up her abode at Duncombe House, with all her furniture, baggage, her six younger children, and the faithful maid of all work.

One circumstance of her mother's thoughtfulness and kindness delighted Mary exceedingly, and this was her having called at Forester House, and arranged with Mrs. Durett so liberally for her daughter's expenses, that her presence and services were no longer to be considered due to her governess. Mrs. Durett was copious in her congra-

tulations to Mrs. Wilmot on her good fortune, praised Mary as being a most sweet and docile girl, sent the kindest messages to her by her mother, and said that "if at any time Miss Wilmot came to town, she should be most happy if she would come and stay a short time at Forester House, and give her companions, who would not easily forget her, the pleasure of a sight of their young friend again." She also inquired particularly after Mrs. Wilmot's five other little girls, and gently intimated that with sisters, every additional little sister was received on reduced terms in her establishment. Mrs. Wilmot's account of her visit at the school, where things wore so different an aspect only a short time before, made Mary smile a little. She was disappointed that her mother had not thought of asking to see Harriette Browne, and therefore determined to write to her. In unpacking the box, however, which her mother had brought from Forester House, containing her school books and other things which had been left behind during the holidays, the following kind little note fell out of an old dictionary:—

"MY DEAREST MARY—Mrs. Durett has just told me of your good fortune, and I cannot help crying, to think that you are gone so far off, that I am never likely to see you again. I am very glad, though, for your sake, that you are not coming back, where you used to be so unhappy. Mrs. Durett has employed me to put your things together, so that I shall venture to slip a little letter into one of the books. Something has happened about Miss Boulton, and they say she tried to elope with some gentleman, yet I do not believe such nonsense; but Miss Percivale, I do think, had something to do with it, whatever it was, for they both left Forester House the same day. Mademoiselle is so kind, and we love her so much, and she speaks so kindly of you, that I shall tell her of your good fortune, for she will rejoice to hear it. Now you are a great lady, and live at your seat, Duncombe House! shall you take a lesson from school young ladies, and cut your friends who only have a hired house in an insignificant place, such as T—— Street, for instance? No, dearest Mary, always love me. I shall miss you very much, dear! but I forgot to tell you, that I have a sweet little friend who came to school here on my

account. I was introduced to her and her family, very nice people, and she loves me so much, that it would be impossible for me not to love her, even if she were disagreeable—don't be jealous, Mary, but I cannot love even *you* better than I do her."

It may be remarked, that when writing this part of her letter, Harriette had unconsciously paused just at this sentence and taking the locket from its hiding-place in her girdle, most unaccountably bestowed on it a few kisses; and then replacing it, continued her writing.

"Her name is Cecile, she is a sweet little creature, and as much younger, as you are older than I, so you will not interfere with one another. How I shall miss your gentle admonitions, dear Mary, but I think I am not so impatient as I used to be. I must not go on scribbling so, for I have nothing that can amuse you, excepting that all the 'young ladies,' seem to have found out that they 'always liked you very much,' and seem inclined to quarrel about you, particularly as they are contradicted in these assertions, by being reminded by each other of some instance of unkindness towards you. Did not they love you a great deal, dearest? They say that they always thought you, 'so kind,' 'so amiable,' 'so clever,' 'so accomplished and lady-like,' and 'always liked you, though they did not make a fuss about it,' and 'are so glad to hear of your being in such affluence,' and 'should be so glad to see you again, and hope you will come.' Forgive my repeating such nonsense, and believe, dearest, one person at any rate who really loves you, and wishes to see you again, and that is your affectionately attached,

"HARRIETTE BROWNE.

"Write to me in the holidays, but not here. My poor mamma looks ill, I fancy, and we shall soon lose dear Edward, as he is to get his cadetship much sooner than we expected. Adieu!

"Our Prison-house, Monday."

Mary was greatly pleased at this kind remembrance of her friend, one to whom she had owed so much, and whose disinterested kindness, it might now be in her power in some degree to repay. To write to her at present would be useless, and what evidently Harriette would not wish; she

therefore thought that at some future period, she would obtain her mother's permission for inviting Harriette to visit them, which pleasure she felt sure they should equally enjoy.

It would take some time to give an account of the pleasure all the young tribe of Wilmots took, in exploring the house and grounds belonging to their new abode; what odd little corners they found out, where they all sat huddled together in knots, reciting and conjuring up all sorts of ghost and hobgoblin tales, excited by the sight of the low rooms and dark galleries, with their small latticed casements of green glass, scarcely half a foot above the floor, covered with dark wild ivy on the outside, and thick cobwebs within, obstructing very effectually the light of heaven, that endeavoured to make its way into these obscure retreats. How frightened they were at the tales their own little lips had dared to tell, and which made the very beams and dusty walls to teem with eyes and other fearful sights; until with the alarm they had themselves created, they rushed away, one over the other from the chamber, which they could almost have fancied to be haunted.

How often the little ladies were frightened at the audacious turkies, which gobbled at them as they passed through the poultry-yard, or by the geese that ran hissing at their heels! and how often the young gentlemen were picked up out of the ponds, and brought home covered all over with mud and duck-weed, while following the novel and agreeable pastime of fishing for lizards and tadpoles with their mamma's workbasket fastened to a stick and string!

Notwithstanding all the trouble and confusion the young people caused, so opposed to the former quiet habits of the house, they were great favourites with the servants; particularly with the old ones, who saw in the young misses, only a graduated scale of what their "dear Miss Lucy" had been, at their respective ages.

To the great delight of all the household, Mrs. Wilmot determined to retain them all in her service, deputing her own servant Alice to the office of nurserymaid, that by means of this ordeal, she might gradually be prepared for the lady's-maid place; for she was a very nice looking young woman, and her mistress wished to reward her for years of hard service and fidelity, by keeping her about herself and the children.

No changes or alterations were made either in the house or grounds, but everything was soon restored to the highest state of order, preparatory to the expected return of the now Major Wilmot. And having thus seen them comfortably domesticated in their new and luxurious home, we shall, for the present, bid them adieu.

We should do injustice to the character of Mrs. Wilmot, were we to omit to mention, that a draft for two thousand pounds was forwarded at the earliest opportunity to Mr. Sanford, together with a kind and polite message to him and Mrs. Sanford, intimating that all that had passed, had better be forgotten, and urging, as the strongest motive she could suggest, that although but distantly, yet that they were related, and therefore ought to avoid, if possible, any disunion, and that, both herself and Major Wilmot, should always experience pleasure in seeing them at Duncombe.

This was, perhaps, the effect more of kindness and amiability of disposition, than a deep knowledge of human nature; for how could she suppose, that after what had passed, either Mr. or Mrs. Sanford could bear to show their faces in that house, where from shame and disappointment they could experience nothing but the most painful mortification. The receipt of the draft was acknowledged in the most formal and business-like style by Mr. Sanford, and without any allusion being made to the proffered reconciliation. And thus all intercourse between the two parties was ended.

CHAPTER XIII.

If there is one effort at display or amusement more lamentably senseless or unsatisfactory than another in the annals of school history, and where the smallest possible return of gratification is reaped, after weeks of toil, spent in the necessary preparation, it is a dancing master's ball. This is a perfect phantom of a *fête*, presenting all the external appearance of gay festivity, without one particle of reality in its composition. Yet this was one of the interesting incidents which took place annually in Mrs. Durett's establishment, about a fortnight previous to the midsummer vacations.

On this occasion, a great expenditure was made of time, money, temper, as well as of muscular and mental effort. And with what a trifling return! Simply the gratification of Mrs. Durett's, and M. Benoit's vanity! that it might be said, how greatly the young ladies of Forester House excelled all other young ladies, in the elegance of their style and carriage, and what an exquisite *maitre de danse* was M. Benoit.

In addition to the waste already alluded to, there was a large portion of assurance necessarily to be developed for this occasion, in the fair dancers themselves (to enable them to figure across the room *à la Cerito*), which would be utterly useless and supererogatory afterwards; as such an attribute is not generally considered desirable or interesting in the members of the softer sex.

The parents who at all reflected on the kind of display which their daughters thus made, by dancing *pas seuls*, in the conspicuous performance of the minuets, figure dances, and ballets, and this before upwards of a hundred spectators, were not exactly pleased with the scene. Others among the

visitors who were not so closely interested in the young actresses, could have witnessed dancing better worth seeing at the theatres or opera-house. The young among them, and particularly the young gentlemen, would have preferred taking an active part in the gay scene, and would gladly have assisted the young votaries of Terpsichore, in the now silent and solemn performance of her rites. And the victims themselves would fain have dispensed, either with their three months' preparatory toil, necessary for the execution of flying leaps, and *petits battemens*, or the uninteresting scene itself; for it brought neither laurels to their brows individually, nor afforded them any social amusement, all their pleasure being confined for that evening, to the gazing at a crowd of smart and fashionably dressed people, and the being gazed at by them in return.

Very shortly after the commencement of this half year, M. Benoit had announced his intention of beginning the figure dancing, in preparation for the ball which would occur during the second week in June, and half of each lesson had, since that time, been devoted to this task. But within six weeks of the day appointed for this display, the calisthenics became a daily exercise, in order that the several departments of head, arms, and feet might be in perfect training, and ready against the visits of M. Benoit. Whatever room one entered, or whichever way one looked, young ladies were to be seen hopping, dancing, and flourishing their arms in any spare corner of the rooms; some teaching a younger child her steps, or practising her own, and this as often as they were not actually engaged with their graver studies.

Great sorrow was caused during these practicings, and each dancing day brought a fresh return of vexation, and was the cause of a profuse shedding of tears among the unsuccessful pupils, who had failed in their attempts to please an angry master. M. Benoit, worn out with incessantly hopping, talking, and playing on his violin during four or five hours; tired in mind from the perfect inability he felt of making some frightened or "stupid" child understand the difference between a *battemen* and an *assemblée*, and still more fatigued in limb by his repeated efforts to elucidate practically, as a last resource would put himself into a passion, and almost in tears at the "*paresse*," and "*lourdise*," and "*bêtise*" of his young pupils; would

turn to the teachers or governess, and uniting their displeasure with his own, would bring down on the unhappy young lady a whole volley of reproach and threatening. Meanwhile, the subject of his invectives stood weeping showers of tears into her handkerchief, overcome at the thoughts of the injustice that would require her to dance when, from exhaustion, she was quite incapable of accomplishing another step.

Notwithstanding these sufferings, there was a certain degree of excitement in these scenes, and there are not wanting persons who maintain that "excitement is pleasure," so perhaps, as interrupting the ordinary monotony of their school days, it might prove somewhat amusing and agreeable to the pupils. As the day of the ball approached, the bustle and excitement were hourly augmenting. Nothing now occupied the thoughts of the young ladies, within a fortnight of the gala day, but visions of net frocks, white satin slippers, fancy reticules, ribbons, and flowers, huiles antiques—à la rose—ou jasmin, Eau de Cologne, fruit, lozenges, and other confections of various species.

The day previous to the ball, the hair dresser had been admitted to set in order the heads of the six-and-twenty young ladies who were to dance; and being aware of the feminine fondness for spending money, and especially the partiality peculiar to school girls for cosmetics, scents, and sweetmeats, he had brought with him a plentiful assortment of these luxuries. The latter articles did not come within the province of his profession, but he thought it a promising speculation for making money, and he was not disappointed. The tall, thin, pale Miss Ellis bought sixteen shillings' worth of sugar plums, bon-bons, and French plums, and even ventured to hint, that perhaps Mr. Crispin would bring some tarts or oranges when he came to finish the curling in the afternoon; and she asked one of the teachers to say that she would take ten shillings' worth herself if he did.

He accordingly availed himself of this suggestion, and each time he went to his home he brought back more and more good things. Miss Ellis kept her word, and even exceeded it. She bought twelve bath buns, twenty tarts, twenty cheese cakes, and two dozen oranges; and this, with the percentage annexed as interest by Mr. Crispin, amounted

to twelve shillings and sixpence. This considerable purchase, however, of Miss Ellis's was not perpetrated openly, or all at once; she only procured her large black velvet bag full at a time, and in twelve turns had amassed this delightful quantity of choice dainties, and stored them away in her book box. This provision she reckoned, would just last her until she went home which would be in twelve days, at the moderate rate of one bun, three tarts, and two oranges per diem, besides the sixteen shillings' worth of sweetmeats. So she thought to herself that it was not much, that she should not give any away, but keep her own counsel, and not tell any of her companions who might wish to share with her.

None of the pupils bought in the same wholesale manner as Miss Ellis; but all those who were the most tall, the most thin, and the most pale, were sure to evince a greater inclination towards the eating of "nice things" than their better looking neighbours. Some doubt may in this instance arise between cause and effect, but it is invariably the case that the young ladies who are least nice are ever greedy for the "nicest things." There is, however, a particular look about the sugar-plum fanciers, that to the quick eye of a school girl can never be mistaken. The reticules had all been provided with a view to the fruit, lozenges, &c., and were to be well filled for the purpose of beguiling the time when some of their companions were in the act of dancing and they were compelled to sit still.

The afternoon of the long desired day arrived. The ball was to be held in the school-room, as being more convenient and larger than the drawing-room, and during the whole day men were busily employed in raising seats for the company as well as for the dancers, decorating the walls with festoons of scarlet calico, so becoming to the complexion, and looking so cool and refreshing in the month of June, while bouquets of flowers and coloured lamps were interspersed here and there, as taste and fancy directed. One corner of the room, near the end where the young ladies were to sit, was devoted to the band, and a high and close partition of evergreens and roses was so placed as to screen them from observation. This was a *chef d'œuvre* of policy, suggested by the prudence of Mrs. Durett, to prevent the possibility of the musicians looking at the young ladies or the young ladies looking at the musicians.

As her pupils had thus been driven from their place of resort, by the operations going on in the schoolroom, they were to be seen in various apartments sitting together in little parties, arranging small bouquets of artificial flowers, that were to adorn either the sash at the waist, which was tied on the left side, or to be mingled with the bunch of white satin ribbons that confined the robings at the bottom of the dress. Mrs. Durett had requested that all should appear in dresses of one colour, for the sake of uniformity, and white was selected with the affectation of realizing the *simplex munditiis*; the arrangement of the flowers and ribbon therefore was the only point on which the wearer was permitted to exhibit either her vanity or good taste.

Two young girls, more sensible than the rest, named Harriette and Cecile, were together in the west room, the latter reading aloud, while the former was at work, busily engaged in finishing an urn rug intended as a present for her mamma, and also as a specimen of her ingenuity, and which must be ready before the joyous return of the vacation, of which it now wanted but a fortnight, when the sugar-plum-loving Miss Ellis entered the apartment.

"La, dear me, what can make you so silly as to be sitting here," said she, "working as hard as if it was a school-day, when all the rest are down stairs arranging the flowers, and thinking all about to-night, and getting things ready. Shall you not wear flowers, Miss Browne?"

"Yes, I believe we are all going to have them, I gave mine and Cecile's to Miss Crossman, as she was so kind as to say that she would put them in for us, and I believe she did so this morning, for all our things are laid upon the beds ready for us, against the time we go to dress."

"La, what a droll creature you are Miss Browne, and you intend making Miss Vincent the same, I suppose! La, I would not leave such an important matter to anybody's taste but my own, and certainly not to an under teacher. How silly it is of you to sit working so hard this morning, you have given yourselves such colours with it, and it will not go off by the evening unless you do something to prevent it, and you know there's nothing so vulgar as a colour! It looks so countrified. Whenever I have ever so slight a colour in my cheeks at home, mamma always insists on my taking sixteen of Morrison's pills, because she says she has

such a horror of a "blowsy girl" belonging to her. But the other day, Miss Fletcher (you know what a genteel looking person she is, so pale), well, she told me such a nice plan for making oneself delicate, and that is to eat white paper, the foolscap is the best, and it is so nice, there is a sour taste in it. I do not mean to swallow it, but you understand me. And it really answers, for only see how pale I am to-day, and I have used a whole sheet already. I hope now that I shall never be obliged to take Morrison's pills again, for I shall always follow Miss Fletcher's plan."

"Oh," replied Cecile, looking archly at Harriette, "did you never try to chalk your cheeks, Miss Ellis? that would do best I should think."

"No, I never did; I have heard them say here, though, that when Mrs. Durett required any extra lesson to be prepared for her examination, to escape the learning it they would sham ill, and that to look pale they used to rub their cheeks against the whitewash in the schoolroom; I forget now who it was that told me so, and advised me to try it to day."

"No, that is not the best way, because the rubbing must make your face red, I suppose," replied Cecile. "The right way is to scrape a little of the white off the wall, or take some chalk if you have any, and rub it on something flat and clean; then put a little water, and then add enough white Windsor soap to make it into a thickish paste, and then with a piece of flannel, or your finger, lay it on very delicately."

"La, my dear Miss Vincent, what a clever little creature you are. Who ever taught you such a nice thing as that? not Miss Browne, I fancy! How I do wish that you would make me some for to-night. Oh, you sweet little dear, now do, and I will go and fetch you some white out of the passage, I do not think the workmen or any one is about there now; will you, dear?"

"Yes, that I will, with pleasure, if you wish it; but we had better wait until we are all dressed, and the rest gone down again, and then I will do it for you."

Off ran Miss Ellis, with a piece of paper and a penknife, to procure the chief ingredient from the walls, and as soon as she had left the room Harriette began gently to reproach

Cecile for thus humouring their companion's folly, by inventing such nonsense for her.

"Oh, never mind," said Cecile, "if it will make her happy, and you see that I have won her heart completely."

Miss Ellis presently returned, and giving Cecile the whitewash, and having ascertained from her that it was sufficient, she continued the conversation as follows:

"Miss Browne, do you intend eating any dinner to-day?"

"Yes, to be sure," answered Harriette, "why should I not?"

"Well, my dear, I shall not; I have been talking to Miss Fletcher—you know what a beautiful small waist she has—so genteel! well, she told me that whenever she wanted to look particularly nice, as she does of course to-night, that she never eats a morsel of dinner, and indeed she only eat a piece of bread and butter about as wide and as long as my finger, for breakfast, and only intends to eat a piece the same size at tea time. And she advises me to do the same; and says, that if you only draw your band in very tight, when you begin to get hungry, your appetite will quite go off, and you will not feel that you want anything to eat, and by the evening that your waist will look so small. She showed me just now that her band was pinned in to within just half a yard, and she looks so nice you cannot think. So I shall follow her plan in this also, and I think you had better do the same."

"No," said Harriette, "I suffered a good deal for vanity's sake once, when my aunt had me braced into a fine slender shape, and I do not think I shall willingly torture myself again, thank you for the suggestion."

"Well, I do not think I shall mind much going without my dinner, I somehow do not feel very hungry, so I think I shall do so."

The fact was that Miss Ellis had already consumed two days' ration of the tarts, cheese cakes, oranges, and buns, and was thereby better enabled to keep her intended fast.

The hour arrived for dressing, the tea had been despatched, and the toilets completed, Mr. Crispin having been again in attendance to take out and arrange the hair, which task he accomplished in that singularly elegant and easy style, so well exemplified in his own shop windows, and which has the power of rendering the most simple,

pleasing features, formal and ungraceful, while it adds an unbecoming redness to the ears.

All was completed, and the rest had descended to the school-room, when Miss Ellis came to Cecile, and asked her if she would now be so kind as to do what she had promised. Cecile replied, that it was ready, and bidding her sit down, and placing the cup with the white mixture at her side, she commenced operations, and while Miss Ellis was calling her a "dear, kind little soul," Cecile, with a flannel gently applied the cosmetic. When she had finished, Miss Ellis rose, gave her a tender embrace, and turned to the glass. What was her horror, her consternation, and anger! the mischievous child had rouged her as highly almost as the French governess, Madame La Rue, was wont to be. The first thing was to hit Cecile a severe slap, but missing her aim, the intended recipient having slipped aside, Miss Ellis only struck her delicate thin hand against the corner of a chest of drawers, and groaning with pain and vexation, burst into a passion of tears. Cecile was vexed at the serious turn her intended jest had taken, and approached to beg pardon, and offer consolation; but Miss Ellis this time was more fortunate in her aim, and with the long, bony fingers of the unscathed hand gave Cecile so severe a slap as made the poor child's cheeks tingle with pain. Cecile, however, only laughed, and telling Miss Ellis that she supposed the offence was now cancelled, kindly offered to remove the detested colour from her companion's cheeks. She told her that she had only used a little red tooth powder, instead of chalk, and that she could soon put it right again for her, if she would sit down.

But Miss Ellis would not think of trusting her treacherous friend again, and preferred getting it off herself. She accordingly commenced an ablution of the cheeks, to the imminent risk of her curls. She succeeded in removing the tooth powder entirely, but the effect of her excitement, the cold water, and the rubbing, produced a pink in her cheeks, which had never been there before, and which defied all her efforts to remove. She used Eau de Cologne for the purpose of cooling her face, but this only added fuel to the fire, and the chalk composition was ineffectual as a covering to the brilliant hue; so that greatly vexed, and declaring that as long as she lived, she would never forgive

Miss Vincent, she followed that mischievous young lady to the school-room.

All the pupils and teachers were seated, tier above tier, at the end of the apartment prepared for them, and the musicians were in their places, tuning their various instruments, or arranging their music, when M. Benoit appeared, more beautiful than ever, the brown more bronzed, the rouge more red, his hair more stiffly curled, and more profusely oiled, and his whole dress in the extreme of fashion. He complimented the young ladies on their appearance, then looked down at himself, and arranged his cravat, and when he recognised poor Miss Ellis, who seemed to shrink with shame from every eye, he burst into a tumult of applause, and told her she had never looked so well. But this produced no comfort, no solace to her chagrin, and she seemed still anxious to escape observation. What would her mamma say, or think if she saw her? and a vision of Morrison's pills haunted her imagination for the evening; being certain that she should be carried through a course of them during the holidays, if Lady Ellis should happen to be among the visitors that evening.

The company now began to arrive, the area was cleared, and the ladies and gentleman being seated, the dancing began.

First came two or three quadrilles of eight, danced at the same time. Harriette, though a shy and timid girl, was considered one of M. Benoit's best pupils, but now, exposed to the gaze of so many spectators, she felt no great confidence of her own powers. She succeeded in pleasing Monsieur during the quadrilles, for although her courage flagged a little, yet her part was not very conspicuous. But when she was called out with only three other young ladies to a figure dance, her embarrassment became too evident to the eyes of her master. While as leader, he was accompanying the band with his tiny and almost inaudible kit, he approached Harriette, whispering, "Courage, courage, mademoiselle, très bien," and ran along side her during her dancing. She had now a kind of partridge-like run to make across the room, to the corner close to where the company were seated, and there with arms raised high above her head, in the operatic style, flourishing them alternately in unison with the move-

ment of her feet, she was to *balancer* in divers curious steps, until she was joined by her companions, who, amusing themselves with various designs in the back-ground calculated to exhibit the skill of their master, would presently join and unite with her in a reel.

But at this crisis, Harriette was so appalled at such an odious exhibition of herself, that her arms refused to take the graceful curve, her head to *penchée*, or her feet sufficiently to *degagé*. The head declined upon her chest, the arms fell at her sides, and standing paralyzed for a moment, suffused with blushes, she turned round and half walked, half ran, across the room, and resumed her seat among the rest of her companions.

Mrs. Durett frowned, the company smiled, and M. Benoit seemed almost in a frenzy; but not willing to lose the exhibition of this masterpiece of his invention, he hastily laid down his kit and bow, and performed himself, with wonderful adroitness, the part forsaken by Miss Browne. But the airs and graces, that were intended to look very pretty in a young girl, appeared highly ridiculous in him, particularly when exaggerated and overacted as they were.

Harriette, clasping her friend Cecile's hand in hers, was overcome at what she had done, and the tears which she feared to wipe off, lest they should attract attention, were flowing fast and free into her lap; but other dancers were now called out, and her ill conduct seemed to be forgotten.

A former teacher, during the time that she had been resident at Forester House, had been in the habit, while taking the air with her scholars, of exacting fines, to be paid by any young lady who had the boldness to look at any man, who might pass them in the streets or parks. This little collection of forfeits, which were rigidly exacted, she said "would do very well for the poor box," but we suppose that from her favouring the old adage of "charity begins at home," and considering also, that she was herself a worthy object, Miss Watkins had always appropriated this little fund to her own private purposes.

The fines ran thus—one penny for looking at an artizan or poor man, threepence for looking at a gentleman, sixpence for looking at a private soldier, and one shilling for looking at an officer, and if he should chance to be in full uniform and on horseback, the young lady who ventured a

look towards him, was required to pay the sum of eighteen pence. Miss Crossman, who although a better disposed person than her predecessor, had a strong inclination, which she had evinced on several occasions, for following some of the practises of the *ci-devant* teacher, and had therefore determined in her own mind that she would at this propitious time restore this excellent regulation. It was a promising speculation also, on the present occasion, for a great many civilians, as well as military men were among the visitors, and as *they* looked at the young ladies, it was only natural that the young ladies should occasionally look at them in return.

Early in the evening seeing how matters stood, and were likely to continue, she at once commenced an eloquent harangue on the unlady like boldness of such a practice, and ordered them to desist from looking about them.

"You won't attend to me then? Very well, I shall require the forfeits that the excellent Miss Watkins caused to be paid for the charity box. Now, young ladies, mind what I say, the first I see staring shall be fined."

She, accordingly, kept a sharp look out, walking to and fro before the forms where her pupils were seated; and whenever she approached them they all modestly looked down, and when she had turned away they all again raised their eyes. This went on for some time, until at length she happily observed an audacious young bassoon player, obtruding his face above the evergreens, and looking like a full-blown love among the roses, and occupied in taking a peep at the young ladies and the dancing, and she instantly turned to ascertain whether any one saw him. Poor Miss Browne had accidentally looked in that direction, and for a moment her eyes, now freed from tears, had rested on the ridiculous head that was protruding itself over the screen of laurels and flowers, and turning towards Cecile, she slightly smiled. Miss Crossman, congratulating herself at this piece of good luck, walked instantly towards Harriette, saying—

"Very well, Miss Browne, that's just like you, as dear Miss Percivale would say, 'keep company with half boarders, and smile at a fiddler,' or whatever he may be. Very well, do as you like, there's no possibility of making ladies of some people; only, after all I have said for your good, and as it is before all this gay company that you have dared to

behave in so ungenteel a manner, you'll please to pay me half a crown the first thing to-morrow morning."

It was in vain that Harriette, blushing with shame and indignation at having it supposed that she had been endeavouring to attract the attention of a musician, assured Miss Crossman that she had only chanced to see him for a moment, but that she would willingly have paid the half crown to have been freed from such an unjust imputation. Miss Crossman was now too busily as well as pleasantly engaged to attend to Harriette, for the other young ladies, overhearing what had passed, naturally turned to look at the hardy bassoon player, who still continued his survey, unconscious that his unromantic, round, and florid countenance, was exciting so much interest among the fair nymphs around him.

Miss Crossman, therefore, continued marking down all the infringers of her well-timed law, and had nearly amassed the sum of twenty-four shillings, when Mademoiselle, the good-natured French teacher, joined her, and perceiving how she was employed, told her how very foolish and unjust it was, for that the *chères petites* were sufficiently restricted at other times, so that a little amusement should be permitted them now, if they did not behave unbecomingly. Miss Crossman was not pleased at this interference of Mademoiselle, and was in the act of asserting her own prerogative, which permitted any teacher to make any law that was to be for the welfare of her pupils, when there arose a slight stir behind them, and turning round, they saw that poor Miss Ellis had fainted away, and that Miss Fletcher, who sat next her, was in the act of following her example. What could be done? it would never do for the company to witness such a catastrophe. Mrs. Durett might be displeased if they attempted to carry out these two long girls before all the company, and they must necessarily pass by them in going out of the room. Miss Crossman, therefore, made signs to the young ladies to be quite still, not to be looking about or exciting a commotion. Nothing was done, therefore, to remove or assist Misses Fletcher and Ellis, while Miss Crossman gently crossed the room and sought Mrs. Durett. She found that lady in the hall giving some directions to the housekeeper; who on hearing what had occurred, was exceedingly distressed, yet exclaimed—

"Thank you, Miss Crossman, you have pleased me very much; your conduct has been exceedingly discreet and judicious; it certainly would appear ill in the eyes of my company, and give an idea that the dear children were neglected, if it became known. Wait one minute, and I will invite my friends to partake of the refreshment provided for them. Everything, I am told, is ready and on the table, and the candelabras lighted, are they not, Claridge? Very well; I will now return with you, Miss Crossman; the company will soon be in the supper rooms, and when the dancing room is cleared, take care that every means is used to recover these silly children. I suppose the heat of the room has been too much for them, and as soon as they are revived have them carried up and put into bed directly. And tell M. Benoit that we will have the ballet as soon as we return to the schoolroom, and that after it is finished and the visitors are departed, I hope that he will do me the favour of remaining to sup with me, when I trust that you and Mademoiselle will join us."

Miss Crossman expressed her gratitude for this attention of Mrs. Durett, and both the ladies returned to the scene of festivity. Mrs. Durett immediately led off the visitors to the supper rooms, and Miss Crossman, with one of the maid servants, by dint of volatile salts, violent slapping of the hands, and pouring vinegar into the eyes, noses, and mouths of the fainting girls while attempting only to bathe their temples, succeeded in restoring animation to their poor victims, who woke only to a consciousness of suffering from the smarting effects of the remedies which had been used.

They were immediately carried up stairs in the arms of two stout housemaids, who were summoned for the purpose, one facetious maid declaring that she "could carry the long Miss Ellis a great deal easier if she might tie her up in a knot, for she was so spare and so long that there was nothing to hold by."

They continued very faint until their dresses were unfastened, after which they so quickly recovered that Miss Ellis could hardly be persuaded to go to bed, because she would necessarily be obliged to forego the pleasure of partaking of a thin potation called "negus," and the cakes which on these occasions were always produced for the refreshment

of the dancers. Remonstrance was vain, and Miss Crossman compelled both the invalids to retire to rest, saying—

“Your being well is no argument with me, for if you are not ill now you both of you deserve punishment for giving so much trouble; so good night,” and she retired with the servants and the candles, leaving the two girls in the dark, there to “chew the cud of bitter” disappointed “fancy,” while their companions were still witnessing the gay scene below, and looking forward to their luxurious refecton, after the fatigues of the day.

The company had returned to the room, and the ballet was in the process of execution, when Miss Crossman descended. It excited universal applause at its conclusion. The company now promenaded round the room, and seeking out their young friends from among the pupils who joined them, spoke kindly, complimented them on their performance, and then withdrew to their respective carriages. The cake and negus had now to be distributed among the pupils. Miss Crossman dealt out one slice of cake to each girl, with her gloved hand, and each having been provided with a half pint mug, a servant came round with the negus in a large beer can, and administered to each young lady her just proportion. To the fastidious taste this beverage was not exactly nice, it being composed of one bottle of home-made wine, one pound of treacle, one ounce of tartaric acid, and three-fourths of warm water. We are led to be thus precise in the mention of this cheap manufacture for the benefit of any persons disposed in an economical manner to treat their friends or dependants. But added to this, in the negus now alluded to, there was a slight flavour of bad beer, acquired by its transient residence in the beer can. After this satisfactory and refreshing repast, the young people retired to their dormitories,—Mrs. Durett and her allies sat down to a luxurious hot supper, and thus ended this memorable day!

CHAPTER XIV.

The midsummer vacation had arrived, and the dispersion of the pupils from Forester House to their several homes had taken place, without any incident worthy of notice, beyond the ordinary bustle of packings up and departures. Harriette had only been a day or two at home, when she received a most kind and friendly letter from Miss Wilmot. This informed her of all that she had long been wishing to know, and in addition to what has previously been narrated, Mary told of her dear father's return among them, and that having thrown up his commission, he was never again going to leave his family or home. She also mentioned that a visit to town had been proposed by Major Wilmot, when she and her two eldest brothers would accompany their parents, that she then hoped to introduce her relations to Mrs. and Miss Browne, that they might have an opportunity of adding their thanks to her own, for all Harriette's past kindness to her. She also spoke of the happiness they were all enjoying in a lovely country, and in having all their dear family once more assembled together; and she also expressed a hope that Harriette would one day visit them.

This information gave our heroine great pleasure, and she was in daily expectation of hearing of her friend's arrival in town, when one morning she saw from the window a lady very like Miss Percivale pass by. She was looking rather ill, and not so nicely attired as she used to be when at Forester House; her dress was the same but it had become faded and shabby. Harriette had very naturally never been fond of Miss Percivale, but she was now interested at thus accidentally seeing her again, and perceiving that she was looking less well and happy than when they had last been together. She longed to watch where she was going, but

that was impossible, and she therefore determined to observe if she returned again through T—— Street.

At about five o'clock Edward came from the window, and said—

“Look, Harriette, look! make haste, here is the person you were speaking of this morning coming back again, down the street.”

It was again Miss Percivale, and having satisfied herself of the fact, Harriette withdrew from the window lest she should be recognised. The following day Miss Browne was on the alert, with Edward, at the hours of nine and five, at which time her former instructress had passed on the preceding day, and saw her go and return at the same periods. Thus it went on day after day for a week or two, when Harriette became anxious to know more of her present mode of life, and where she resided. She very naturally guessed that she was attending some family in the immediate neighbourhood as a daily governess. Pity had no small share in this curiosity, and she therefore determined if possible to gratify it. She easily persuaded her little brother to trace Miss Percivale to her home the next time she passed, and, by waiting at the corner of the street until she came in sight, and walking carelessly on the side opposite to the one she took, he followed her, unperceived, as far as Red Lion Street, Bloomsbury, where, at a small and rather shabby green-grocer's shop, he watched her knock at the private door and walk in. Edward entered the shop, and having bought a little fruit, while he was eating it, he said carelessly to the woman who was in attendance—

“Does not a Miss Percivale lodge here?”

“Why, sir, what makes you ask, do you know her?”

“No,” replied Edward, “but I do not want you to answer if you do not like to do so; but a friend of mine knows her very well and wished to find out where she lived, and I saw Miss Percivale go in at your private door this minute.”

“Well, sir, she does lodge with me, but she's a high spirit and has been better off once, and so she would not like it known that she is living in such a poor lodging as mine.”

“Then,” replied Edward, “you had better not tell her that I asked. I shall do her no harm by knowing where

she lives, and if she should be in distress perhaps my friends might wish to be of use to her; that was all that made me ask, for she looks ill to-day."

Having finished his fruit, and also gained all the information that his sister had wished for, Edward left the shop and returned home.

"That's a well-spoken young gentleman," thought Mrs. Gibbins. "He can't have come out of any ill will or sauciness, I am sure, and yet I know that Miss Percivale would be certain to fancy so if I told her, for, poor thing, she always thinks whatever happens, that somebody must mean to affront her. She's so high and so fractious she worries anybody's life out, and yet, though I can't help liking of her, for old acquaintance' sake, I shan't be sorry when she's found another situation, poor thing."

Thus ran Mrs. Gibbins's soliloquy, and it now becomes necessary to give some account of Miss Percivale's proceedings after her quitting Forester House.

As soon as she had recovered from the agitation and indisposition occasioned by the circumstances which took place in the lobby in Bow Street, and was cool enough to reflect, she resolved not to remain another hour in the house, where she must now become an object of ridicule, contempt, and blame. Stung with the bitterness of disappointment and mortified pride, duped as she had been into playing a silly part, for which she might justly be censured, as well as laughed at, and that by an insignificant pupil of her own, and by a journeyman, as Mrs. Durett had called him! the thought that for the purpose of advancing the intimacy and forwarding the plans of these unworthy creatures she had been used as a "cat's-paw," and had received as real and sincere the sham admiration and devotion of Mr. Sutton—all this was far more than she could bear. And racked with various contending feelings, she went to collect and pack her property of different kinds, and without seeing or speaking to any one she had left the house.

By means of a trifling *douceur*, offered to the man servant, Miss Percivale succeeded in securing his services, and by him her trunks and bandboxes had been removed, unobserved, from the back of the house, and placed at the nearest shop. He then called a coach, and Miss Percivale, having shortly after arrived at the spot, and having seen that her

property was all there and right, gave the servant half a crown, and enjoining him to silence, had entered the coach and driven off.

Her finances were at this period rather low, as it was past the middle of the half year, and the teachers only received their salaries at the vacations. Economy was therefore necessary, as she knew not how long it might be ere she could secure another situation for herself. She therefore desired the coachman to drive her to Red Lion Street, and stop at the house of John Gibbins, the greengrocer, who lived at No. 5, on the left hand of the street.

She was led to the selection of this locality by having known Gibbins and his wife, who had formerly been residents in her native village. The man had been a gardener, and occasionally worked for her father, and having saved a little money, had married a respectable young woman of the same place, who adding her earnings to his, had enabled them to set up a greengrocer's shop in London. Here she thought that she could get a lodging at a lower rate than elsewhere, and kind words and kind attendance gratis, which in this money-making world cannot always be obtained without fee, and which but too generally cost a great deal more than poor folks are able to pay for them.

Here she was fortunate enough to secure a warm welcome and a very tiny dark room, for which she was charged a very trifling sum. This apartment was to serve her as parlour, bedroom, kitchen, and hall, and having seen her boxes safely deposited, and having requested Mrs. Gibbins to procure for her consumption a little tea, milk, sugar, a loaf of bread, and a few other necessities, she set off, with very agitated feelings, to walk to Brompton, for the purpose of ascertaining what share that "false-hearted" old lady had taken in her present disgrace and sufferings, and to gain whatever light she could from her recital of what had past.

It was a weary way to go, but Miss Percivale was a good walker, and had the muscular powers begun to flag, the energies of her highly-wrought mind would have supported her through this fatiguing task. She reached the house which she had only that very morning quitted with such different feelings. Young hope personating the charming contour of Mr. Alfred Sutton had then been smiling at her

in her visions of approaching competence and independence, and which even her alarm for his safety, and her dread of Mrs. Durett's displeasure, had not then the power to efface. This fair bubble, varied with the prismatic colours which young love had blown, and which had been floating gracefully, as she fancied, within the horoscope of her destiny, now lay at her feet like the little drop of soapsuds after the bright sphere has burst. But she possessed strength of mind, and that had nerved her to the task. She knocked a loud and imperative knock. The merry, cheerful face of the maid presented itself, and dropping a curtsy of recognition and pleasure—

"Oh, ma'am!" she exclaimed, "he is found, my mistress had a note from him this morning." But the bright smile with which this was uttered had no effect in allaying the expression of haughtiness and virtuous indignation which were rigidly fixed in the features of the injured lady, who inquired—

"Is your mistress at home?"

"Yes ma'am."

"Then show me the way to the sitting-room."

The servant threw open the parlour door, and announced Miss Percivale.

"Oh, my dear, I am so glad to see you," exclaimed Mrs. Sutton, advancing cordially to greet her, "I've heard from my truant boy this morning; he is a good son, Miss Percivale, for with all his faults (though I don't know what they are) he never forgets his poor old mother, and that's a sweet trait in a son, is it not, Miss Percivale, when they are grown up? However, the....."

"I am sure I don't know," replied Miss Percivale, with a toss of the head.

"Well, but I hope you will know some day what a blessing and comfort a kind son is. However, the rogue, he cost us a pretty deal of alarm last night, did he not, my love?"

"More than he deserved, a pretty deal," replied her visitor, with another dignified toss of the head.

"Bless me, there's something the matter, I can see; I hope, however, it's nothing but a lover's quarrel, hey, my dear," said the old lady, with a smile and a little nudge of the elbow, "hey, my dear?"

"Don't talk to me of lovers, ma'am."

"Dear me, and why not? they used to be very agreeable people in my day."

"Then days are altered, I suppose. Do you know how your son, Mr. Alfred, was employed last evening, and where he passed the night?"

"No, my dear, but I shall hear soon."

The door of the room was just then thrown open, and Mr. Alfred stood before them. His mother went forward to welcome him, but he observed her not, and stood aghast.

Miss Percivale rose with majestic displeasure, and while anger's roseate hue augmented on her cheeks and brows, she exclaimed, while she almost appeared to stamp her foot, "Sir!"

"Adorable, benign, and injured Miss Percivale! permit me on my knees to crave forgiveness!"

"Wretch! deceiver! hypocrite!"

"Go on, go on, dear Miss Percivale; no words can be harsher than I deserve; but from *your* lips even these harsh epithets fall gently on me."

"No more hypocrisy, sir! rise, and let me pass—the same roof shall never more shelter us! Begone, sir, and let me pass!"

"No, no, do not say so; in pity, in common justice, hear me: mother, plead for me, she cannot be inexorable to you."

"Yes I can, sir," replied Miss Percivale, "you merit not an audience!"

"I merit nothing, adorable creature; your dignified displeasure, while it commands my absence, adds so greatly to your manifold attractions, that it only draws me closer to you, and showing me the height of my folly and my fault, plunges me into an abyss of despair. But I deserve it all—you cannot be more unkind, more cruel than my conduct has merited, but pity, the greatest ornament of woman, cannot be a stranger to your breast. I can mitigate my fault, if you will but hear me; mother, entreat her for me. Oh! what dignity, what grandeur of soul is evinced in those brilliant orbs. You relent—benignity is falling on me from your eyes—smile! only one smile, and I will—say that you pardon me, and I will begone for ever!"

"I shall not smile, sir—I will not, the longest day I have to breathe—I will never forgive you, and if you do not

quit the house instantly, I must. I forgive you, Mrs. Sutton, because I do not believe you know anything about what has passed, and therefore you are innocent; but I shall never forgive myself, for having put myself in the power of such an unkind, ungrateful creature." With great violence, she threw open the front-door, which was close to the apartment where they stood, and walked hastily down the garden path.

"Never mind, my charming vixen, if you don't choose to come to terms, its no fault of mine, and I shan't break my heart about it. My dear mother, I am really sorry to distress and frighten you; but I will confess to you, that I have been tempted to act both the villain and the fool, and I have been very fortunate to escape as I have done, and I hope it will be a lesson to me as long as I live. A little chit of a school-girl, has been leading me on to all sorts of knavery and mischief, and I might have lost my business in consequence. Thank my stars, and Mrs. Durett's self-interest, which have got me off as well as I am. So now, my dear mother, pray give me something to eat, for I am uncommon hungry, and I'll tell you the long and the short of it by and by."

Miss Percivale arrived at her lodging in Red Lion Street, fatigued and out of spirits; she was disappointed, for she had really intended to have relented, and yielded to the entreaties of Mr. Sutton, but had ventured only on this last piece of tragedy, because he had told her that it was so becoming, and with the hope of eliciting more compliments and solicitations. And not until she had passed through several streets, did she give up the vain thought, that he would have followed, and solicited her to return. She had no idea of his giving in so soon, or she would not have ventured on such a step. Was her lover then really gone? had she tried his patience, and his temper too far? She felt persuaded that his intentions were honourable, and that he had fully made up his mind to do her justice, and she could not doubt the sincerity of his affections, however he might for the time have been drawn aside by such an object of ambition, as Miss Boulton's fortune had presented to his view.

All the inhabitants of Forester House had of course been favoured with the confidence of Miss Boulton, respecting her

independent fortune, and also of its amount ; and Miss Percivale naturally argued, that Mr. Sutton also had become acquainted with the fact, and that the chance of possessing himself of this wealth, had presented too strong a temptation to the cupidity of her otherwise faithful Alfred ; and she also felt convinced that the fifteen thousand pounds presented the only attraction which could be found in a "silly little chit, like Emma," sufficiently powerful to induce him to be inconstant to one for whom, she doubted not, he entertained a very warm and sincere attachment.

Thus argued Miss Percivale, and as these thoughts entirely prevented the possibility of her eating anything which the care of Mrs. Gibbins had provided, it also prevented her from sleeping until a late hour the succeeding morning. For several weeks after this very eventful day, poor Miss Percivale had been anxiously watching for some employment ; she went daily to a register-office—she was tempted to advertise—and she employed Mrs. Gibbins to inquire of all who resorted to her shop, for some family or school where a governess was wanted. She had literally come to her last five shillings, and many wakeful nights and anxious days were passed in the dreary prospect of destitution. She also had foolishly cherished a vain hope, that in some of her walks she might encounter Mr. Sutton and she thought with regret of the comfortable house and warm welcome she had experienced from the dear, cheerful, little old lady. But it was impossible for her to return there, without an invitation to do so, after the ill-judged manner, in which she had last quitted it. How lonely she felt ! in all the wide extent of London, and in its ever stirring crowds, there was not one being whom she could call a friend, unless it was the kind and humble pair whose house she shared.

At length she heard of a situation in S—— Street, where a lady was wanted, to teach six girls, and two little boys, and was required to instruct them in all branches of polite learning, as well as in ciphering, writing, and sewing, and this on the moderate terms of twenty-five pounds a-year, as daily governess. This was better than starvation, although it was hardly sufficient to keep her even in the wretched way in which she now lived at Mr. Gibbins's house ; but necessity obliged her to accept this small stipend for her services, and

it was at this period, while walking backwards and forwards in her attendance on the Misses and Masters Grumford, that Harriette had first observed her former teacher.

For ten days, or a fortnight, Harriette and her brother observed that Miss Percivale was constant and punctual in passing through T—— Street, at the hours of nine and five; but her step became more languid, and the former remarked that her cheek grew paler, each time she saw her. At length, a day or two elapsed without her having been seen by the young Brownes on her ordinary beat, and Harriette was struck by a sudden fear that Miss Percivale must be ill. She had learnt of Edward the humble character of her lodging, and feared that, in addition to the privations attendant on limited means, she had now to contend with the sufferings of ill health.

She therefore easily succeeded in persuading her brother to undertake another expedition to Red Lion Street, for the purpose of ascertaining if her suppositions were correct. Edward returned in the afternoon with the information that Miss Percivale was really confined to her bed with something of a feverish complaint, and was very ill; that Mrs. Gibbins almost wept, when she told him that the invalid would not consent to send for a medical man, and that she was sure unless they did so the poor lady must die.

Every recollection of past grievances was effaced by the spirit of compassion and kindness which Harriette now felt for her former harsh and illiberal teacher; and on hearing this account of Miss Percivale, she went immediately to her mother, to retail to her the results of Edward's inquiries, and ask whether anything could be done by them for the poor lady's comfort or benefit.

An application of this kind ever met with ready attention from the benevolent and tender-hearted Mrs. Browne; and at an early hour the following morning she was at the green-grocer's shop, inquiring after the state of the poor invalid. Mrs. Gibbins gave a most distressing account of the impatience and irritability of Miss Percivale, and also ventured to hint, on Mrs. Browne's asking in what way she could be of most service, that her lodger was so exceedingly high and proud, that if she thought she was to be indebted

to charity for even the necessities of life, she believed that she would rather die, than receive them as such.

"But what can be done, then," replied Mrs. Browne, "do you suppose that she has money of her own, sufficient with a small addition to pay a doctor?"

"Dear me, no, ma'am, I do not mind telling you—for from my being an old friend, ma'am, as it were, of Miss Percivale's, I know everything—indeed, we are upon trust for her lodging many many weeks, but since she has been attending of Mrs. Grumford's family, she says she shall be sure to pay me soon, as the quarter is due next week, and she meant to ask for it. Indeed, the lady she was last with, Mrs. Durett, in — Square, owes her money, but something has happened there, and she's above asking for it, or letting it be known that she is obliged to live in such a poor room as mine (for she has not any of the best of the house, as I have other lodgers in the best rooms), and I don't believe at this moment she has more, if so much, as one shilling in her pocket, and, poor lady, I can't help fancying that all this has been too much for her."

"How do you suppose that I can be of use to her? The first thing that ought to be attended to, is for her to see a doctor. I will undertake that the expenses of his visits and medicine are paid, if you can arrange it, and persuade Miss Percivale to admit him, and perhaps you may think of some way to avoid her knowing that she is indebted to a stranger, if that will displease her."

"You are very good, ma'am, and I don't want to seem to take any credit myself in the matter, but the only way I can think she would receive it, would be for me to say, that 'as we always have money coming in (though it is but little sometimes), that we can easily lend her the money for the doctoring, and that she'll be sure to be able to pay us again some day, when she's better; and that she ought not to neglect attending in time to herself, or else she may never get well again.' Shall I tell her this? I hope I don't offend you, but you can't think, ma'am, how odd and fractious she is, and I don't see any other way of persuading her."

Mrs. Browne readily agreed to this plan, as the only means they could adopt, with any chance of success. And Mrs. Gibbins went upstairs to see whether she could suc-

ceed in prevailing on the patient to follow her advice. She knocked at a bed-room door on the second story, and having been desired in a querulous tone to "come in," she did so, when Miss Percivale, continued, "How you do keep on teasing me; I wish to gracious I was anywhere where I could be quiet and at rest, even if it was at the bottom of the sea, you keep on coming in and out, in and out incessantly."

"Bless ye, poor thing!" thought Mrs. Gibbins, "why not even the bottom of the sea would be quiet if *you* were there!" but spoke thus, "I came to see if I could be of any use, and to ask if you would take a little tea or broth, we have some very nice broth I've just made for the children."

"No, I tell you, I don't want anything; my head is so dreadfully painful, I only want to be left alone."

"But, ma'am, Gibbins and I wants you to see the doctor."

"Doctor, indeed!" said Miss Percivale, rising angrily in the bed; "and who's to pay him, pray? I want to die, and I *wish* to die, and you won't even let me do that peaceably!"

"No, ma'am, certainly not, for we love you too well—why shouldn't you try to get well, and be happy again?"

"Happy! don't insult me, with talking of happiness! There's no such thing—for me at least."

"Oh! don't say so, ma'am; but I was going to say, that the gentleman as came to see my little girl, when she was so ill, might just give you something cooling, just to make your head easier, and he's very good, and is never in a hurry for his money."

"No, not with poor people, you mean to say! good indeed!—do you think that I want his goodness? or his charity, you would say. No, I'm not fallen so low as that yet, as to crave the benevolence of an apothecary."

"La, ma'am, of course I did not mean that; but some gentlemen are in a hurry for their money, and some are not, and as Gibbins and I are always, you see, receiving little sums, we could let you have anything you wanted just whiles you are ill, and when you are receiving your large sums, it will be easy enough to repay us. And I love you, ma'am, too well to see you suffering so, and I'd do anything in the world to serve you. May I send for him? only

give me leave, and he'll be here in a minute or two, and will set you up quite, in a visit or two, perhaps."

"Well, thank you, Charlotte," said Miss Percivale; "you are very good, and I don't mind being indebted to you, but is it not hard, that I have not another friend than you upon earth? and then to think that if I had only plenty of money, and a fine establishment, that I should have more friends than I should know what to do with? I don't believe there's an evil upon earth that drives people from one, like poverty." ("Like poverty and pride together," thought Mrs. Gibbins, "that's true enough.") "Oh! is it not a hateful world, Charlotte?"

"Oh! ma'am, I finds the world well enough, if it wasn't for a few bad 'uns as are in it."

"Then, Charlotte, you may send for your doctor, if you think he'll do me any good, and I thank you for your kindness. I am sorry I was so cross to you just now, but I cannot help it sometimes, though I am always provoked with myself when I am so, either to you, or your good husband."

"Thank you, thank you, ma'am; then I'll send for him directly."

Pleased with the success of this embassy, and of the mollifying effects which her own kindness and forbearance had produced on the mind of her lodger, Mrs. Gibbins descended to the shop, and having communicated to her visitor the consent she had obtained from Miss Percivale, to see the doctor, and Mrs. Browne having slipped into the good little woman's hand a sovereign, to meet any present expenses, and given her address, for the security of the money to the medical attendant, if Miss Percivale should not be able to pay him herself, Mrs. Browne returned home. Harriette was delighted at the generous part her mother had acted, and day after day, inquiries were made for the sufferer; occasionally by Mrs. Browne going herself, that she might ascertain more precisely the state and progress of the patient, and whether there was anything else which she might procure for her comfort and relief. The nature of her complaint was a nervous fever, and as it was very severe at the time, so her recovery was of very slow progress. Mrs. Browne provided jellies, and many other delicacies, which contributed to restoring the patient's

strength, all of which Miss Percivale received at the time as the attention of her good-natured landlady. But at length, when she was sufficiently convalescent, Mrs. Gibbins, who was ashamed of having the credit bestowed upon her, which was not her due, ventured to intimate, that a lady who had come to the shop, and heard of her illness, was the person who had kindly provided all the little confections for her use, and who had expressed a wish to see the invalid as soon she was sufficiently recovered to admit a visitor.

This was a bitter trial to a spirit like Miss Percivale's, who experienced so great a dread of being indebted to any one, or of being considered as an object of benevolence; but her pride had been a little reduced by her bodily weakness, so that she consented to see and thank the stranger. Mrs. Browne, without giving her real name, was therefore one morning shown up stairs to see the invalid, and although Miss Percivale evinced great agitation she behaved very politely. She indulged herself nevertheless by making several silly excuses for being "seen in so mean and shabby an apartment;" that "it must have been owing to some misrepresentation of that simple, yet well intentioned, person, Mrs. Gibbins, which could have given an idea that she could *want* such favours as those with which Mrs. Browne had supplied her;" and that "although she felt greatly obliged by the kind feeling which had prompted it, yet that she was by no means in the habit of laying herself under such obligations;" and ended by assuring her visitor that "her friends were at a distance," and "nothing but her fear of distressing them had been the cause of her secluding herself in such a place, and that only until she was in better health."

Mrs. Browne pitied the lamentable folly which had tempted her sick friend to talk in such a manner; but as an open and generous demeanour is apt to beget the same feelings in others, so, after a visit or two, Mrs. Browne having gratified Miss Percivale by accepting an invitation to tea, on which occasion Mrs. Gibbins permitted them to use the best sitting room, she succeeded in drawing from the teacher what she already knew, of her having lived at Mrs. Durett's—the suddenness (but not the cause) of her leaving that house—and also of the quarter of a year's salary that was due to her; and Mrs. Browne having

volunteered to obtain that sum from Mrs. Durett, Miss Percivale consented to her doing so, on the condition only that no mention should be made of her present place of residence, or mode of living. The having accepted this invitation to tea had been, perhaps, the most judicious part of Mrs. Browne's conduct during this singular kind of *liaison*, as it was the means of establishing a species of equality between the two parties, on which grounds only Miss Percivale could at any time have been tempted into a friendliness of feeling. She considered that by this invitation she had in a degree cancelled her obligation for the jellies and other delicacies, and having instituted a friendship between them, she could now bear to think of the favours she had received.

By the exertions of her new ally the sums due to Miss Percivale both from Mrs. Durett and Mrs. Grumford were duly paid, and the kindhearted Mrs. Browne having privately settled with Mr. Probet for nearly two-thirds of his account, Miss Percivale was with ease enabled to settle the moderate amount of the bill which he forwarded to her as the whole. The rent and other expenses also were paid, and she still possessed a comfortable sum in her purse. Thus rendered easy in her circumstances, the mind became tranquil, and she began rapidly to regain her strength; and when sufficiently restored to health to be equal to engaging herself again in the arduous duties of tuition, she obtained a desirable situation as teacher in a school in the country, and took her leave of Mrs. Browne without having obtained any knowledge either of her name or place of residence.

CHAPTER XV.

The excitement caused by the illness and distress of poor Miss Percivale had no sooner subsided, than a new subject of interest, and of a more pleasing kind, was awakened in the mind of Harriette by the arrival in town of her friend, Miss Wilmot. The meeting between two families already so prepossessed in each other's favour could not fail of being satisfactory, and the intimacy which quickly sprung up between the several members was a source of great pleasure to all, but especially so to the young friends Harriette and Mary.

As Major Wilmot's chief reason for allowing his elder children to accompany Mrs. Wilmot and himself to London had been the wish to show them some of the principal lions of the metropolis, which his limited means had hitherto prevented his doing, a vast number of agreeable expeditions were set on foot, and several places of public amusement visited, in all which parties of pleasure Harriette, her brother Edward, and sometimes Cecile Vincent, were invited to join.

Among other sights a review at Woolwich offered a delightful prospect for a day's diversion. To the Wilmots it presented no new attraction, but it would be pleasant to visit familiar scenes—to see former friends—and very agreeable for the Major there to meet his old comrades in arms; and Harriette and Edward were of course highly delighted at the thought of seeing what was so perfectly new to them, as a review of artillery.

On the appointed day, Mrs. Wilmot's barouche, which was a modern well-built carriage, was standing at Mrs. Browne's door, Mary having just arrived for the purpose of fetching her friend, and the two girls were together

in the drawing-room when "Miss Falkland" was announced. The servant also added that Miss Falkland would prefer seeing Miss Browne in the dining-room, as she could not remain long. Harriette therefore ran down stairs unconscious of the cause which prevented her cousin from ascending to the drawing-room, but as soon as Harriette had greeted her visitor the truth became apparent, for with a disconcerted expression of countenance Eliza immediately said,

"I came, Harriette, entirely out of kindness and good nature to you this morning, but I am so provoked after all I have said for your real advantage, that you should still persist so obstinately in patronizing this half-boarder, that I can hardly bring myself to tell you my errand. But mamma has allowed me to come and ask you to accompany us this morning to Woolwich, and I now hardly feel inclined to do so, or to act any kind part by you, because you are so opinionated and self-willed, that you are quite indifferent to anything I may say. Can you, however, on this occasion tear yourself from your dear friend for a few hours and go with us, for I am told she is here? Mamma wishes it, if my aunt will allow you to do so."

"I am very much obliged to you and my aunt, but Miss Wilmot has just brought me the same invitation from her mamma, and I have consented to accompany their party to the review, and their carriage is now at the door waiting for me."

"What do you mean? *their* carriage! Do you really mean to say that Miss Wilmot's parents have a carriage, and such a handsome one as is now at the door, and allow their daughter to be at school as a half-boarder? Nonsense!"

"She is not a half-boarder now, she has left Forester House for half a year. Her family have come into a very large property in Dorsetshire by the death of an uncle of Mrs. Wilmot's! Will you come up stairs and see her? I think she....."

"No! indeed! I can never look upon her as a lady now, and if you are really going to the review with her party you may depend upon it I shall not notice you, or appear to recognize you. The Hon. Misses Battisforde are to be there, former schoolfellows of mine, who also knew Miss Wilmot before you came to Forester House, besides many

other high and fashionable persons with whom I am acquainted; and I shall not choose to expose myself before them by bowing to you, while surrounded by your vulgar Wilmots; and depend upon it I shall not speak to you there, so do not attempt speaking to me, and when I tell mamma, I am convinced that she will see the reasonableness of what I say, and will act as I intend doing, so adieu, my silly country cousin; keep to your fancy about 'generosity' and 'disinterestedness,' and see how it will prosper! If you live in the world you must act as the world does." Saying which Miss Falkland quitted the room and the house.

Poor Harriette was sadly vexed, and hardly knowing in what humour to return to the drawing-room, she remained standing where her cousin had left her for many minutes, hesitating in her mind whether it were not best to give up the expedition altogether. She was not herself afraid of encountering the folly and incivility of Eliza, but she felt that, perhaps by going, she might expose Mary to some annoyance, who could not fail to understand the motives of her relation's conduct, should Eliza carry her threat into execution, and persuade Lady Falkland to adopt the same behaviour.

Having at length made up her mind, she rejoined Mary; she told her the errand upon which Eliza had been sent, and also intimated that something had occurred, which would now prevent her from accepting Mrs. Wilmot's kind invitation to accompany her to Woolwich. Mary for a moment looked surprised and puzzled, but soon exclaimed,

"Oh! Harriette you shall go, and with your aunt. I understand it perfectly, as well as if I had overheard your conversation with Miss Falkland. She does not like you to be seen in company with me. Is it not so? but I will not pain you by requiring an answer; for it is so entirely in accordance with the spirit I have been accustomed to witness at school, that I am not surprised. You know that I have suffered from the effects of.....I cannot find a polite word for it, as Miss Falkland is your relation, but I so am accustomed to.....being despised, that I do not mind it so much now. It is as I guessed—I feel convinced, that she would not like to speak to you when in my company."

Seeing the tears about to start into Harriette's eyes, who could not deny the cause of the change in her plans, Mary continued—"Do not, dear Harriette, be vexed on my account, I assure you I am now far too happy to feel any annoyance from strangers. What can I want now, more than I possess? Papa and mamma always with me, and providing for me everything which they think can afford me gratification. And now to please me, you shall go with your aunt, and moreover, she added gaily, I will for Eliza's sake promise not to speak to you, nor even look at you, while in their company, excepting quite 'by the sly,' and when nobody is looking, if such an opportunity should occur."

Both the girls laughed at this joke, and Harriette assured her friend that she was equally indifferent to the opinion of her cousin; and that she had only refused going on Mary's account, lest she should while in her company be offended by any absurd conduct of Eliza's. She also assured Mary that she should greatly prefer going with her party, and all was restored, according to the first arrangement. The bonnets were soon put on, and the two girls drove to the house, which was for the present occupied by Major Wilmot, and having taken up the party who there awaited them, together with Edward, they continued their route towards Woolwich, and shortly after arrived on the large open ground selected for the gay military show.

It was a lovely day, and everything conspired to make it particularly delightful to Major Wilmot and all his party. They were hailed by many of their old acquaintance among the officers and their respective families, with whom they appeared very popular. Frequently during the morning did the Falklands carriage pass and repass that of the Wilmots but no symptom of recognizing Harriette could be traced on the countenance of either her aunt or cousin.

At length the two carriages accidentally drew up opposite to each other, when Harriette looked so fixedly at Lady Falkland, and with so arch and comical an expression of countenance, that having succeeded in catching her eye, Lady Falkland was against her will forced into a smile, and was obliged to turn away her head. Sir Arthur nodded to his niece very affectionately, but did so when the

attention of his wife and daughter was occupied in another direction, so that it was evident that the pliant husband had received his cue. Harriette was greatly amused at this absurdity, and did all that looks could effect to worry her cousin whenever they met during the day.

Many of the company had alighted from their carriages after the review was over, among whom were the Falklands and the Wilmots, when Lady Falkland called her daughter's attention by saying,

"I think, Eliza, that I am extremely foolish in listening to your whims, and in allowing myself to act in compliance with them. I have frequently had reason to regret having done so, and never more than I do at this moment. Some school nonsense has led you to avoid a party, who seem to have been surrounded by some of the most distinguished looking people on the ground, and only look at them now, they are apparently in familiar conversation with General Sir Charles Forbes and Lady Eleanor, the very persons with whom I have been so long anxious to become acquainted. People so highly connected! it is really most intensely annoying, however, I shall walk that way, and shall stop and speak to Harriette, and ask her to make me known to Mrs. Wilmot." Saying which, and without waiting for any reply from her daughter, she turned to take Sir Arthur's arm, and at once proceeded towards the spot, where her niece was standing, while Eliza looking very uncomfortable, was obliged to follow.

Having, as if accidentally, approached the party among which Harriette was standing, Lady Falkland with an expression as if it would be impossible to pass so near her niece without stopping to speak to her, looked a species of smiling reproach at Harriette, and then turned to shake hands with her; Sir Arthur and Eliza did the same, but the latter was unable to conceal the dislike she felt for the task. A few commonplace observations were bestowed by the kind aunt upon her niece, which being concluded, she desired Harriette to introduce her to the party in whose company she had come. The ceremony of introduction was hardly completed when Sir Charles and Lady Eleanor quitted the circle, and Major and Mrs. Browne were at liberty to bestow all their attention on their new acquaintance.

Lady Falkland was very warm in her expressions of gratitude for the "favour conferred by Mrs. Wilmot on her niece, in bringing her to so gay a scene," and Mrs. Wilmot was equally warm in her assurances that she "derived great pleasure herself from Miss Browne's company, and that her daughter, who had at Forester House laid the foundation of a very strong affection for Harriette, was never satisfied with any amusement unless her friend formed one of the party."

"Your daughter at Forester House, indeed! Eliza dear," continued she, in a tone calculated to prove to Mrs. Wilmot that the idea was perfectly new to her; "allow me to present my daughter to you, Mrs. Wilmot. Eliza you must have been at school with Harriette's friend, Miss Wilmot. Did you know that this was her mamma?" and again addressing her new acquaintance, "Is Miss Wilmot with you this morning? if so, my Eliza would be so pleased to see her."

Mrs. Wilmot knew perfectly well how matters had stood between Miss Falkland and Mary, until within the last few minutes, and she could not at first guess the cause of this unexpected conduct on the part of Lady Falkland. At a short distance from where they were standing, Mary was occupied in conversation with her two brothers, and some of their former friends. Mrs. Wilmot turned and beckoned her daughter to approach, by which time Eliza was prepared to act the part required by her mother. The recognition and shaking of hands was performed with as much politeness, and as great a degree of cordiality, as could be expected between two persons so disposed towards each other; while a painful blush suffused the cheeks of both young ladies.

Harriette, during this scene, looked on with so provokingly quizzical an expression, that her aunt and Eliza were almost put out of countenance, and Mrs. Wilmot and Mary appeared nearly ready to laugh. Lady Falkland was endeavouring to remove the "little awkwardness" which, in spite of her skill, appeared to hang about the affair, when the General again approached. He told Mrs. Wilmot that he had just consigned Lady Eleanor to the charge of Major Wilmot, while he came himself to persuade her and her party to partake of a collation which had been prepared in

the mess-room. This was a distinction for which Mrs. Wilmot was hardly prepared. She acquiesced immediately, and taking the General's proffered arm, and the young people being called on to follow, she made a slight apology to Lady Falkland for quitting her so abruptly, and soon found herself amid all that was brilliant and gay, both in regard to the company assembled and in the arrangements of a very elegant entertainment.

"See how your fancy about generosity and disinterestedness will prosper," sprung to the lips of Harriette, as she took leave of her cousin to follow Mrs. Wilmot, but happily she refrained from giving utterance to words which could have effected no good, and must have caused annoyance.

Lady Falkland, with feelings far from enviable, and which could be exceeded only in their acuteness by those of her daughter, immediately joined Sir Arthur, returned to the carriage, and reached home without having during the drive recovered from the effects of any portion of the mortification which had attended on that morning's adventures.

The vacation was concluded, but ere Harriette had resumed her round of studies at Forester House, the parties of pleasure and amusement, caused by the Wilmot's *séjour* in London had ceased, for they had returned again into the country, very shortly after the scene we have above described.

CHAPTER XVI.

We shall now pass over two years in our history, during which time Harriette continued to prosecute her various studies with great diligence, under the superintending eye of Mrs. Durett, and her rapid improvement and docility gave general satisfaction to all her instructors. Cecile also, under the kind guidance and the assistance of her friend Harriette, was becoming more amiable and tranquil in disposition, as well as advancing in her acquirements; and her progress in all that was desirable was a great subject of satisfaction and pleasure to Mrs. Vincent, on each return of the vacations.

George wrote frequently to his mother and sister, and in his letters to the latter he never failed to introduce a long discussion about his "favourite Edward," with a list of inquiries respecting the Browne family, gradually rising with his subject until, as the climax, he had introduced the name of Harriette, when he concluded with some slightly sentimental yet brotherly message to her, who was his "sister's friend."

During the period of which we judge it best to take only a cursory review, Edward had obtained his appointment, and the painful scene of parting had taken place between himself, his mother, and sister. Separations of this nature, when a young man leaves his native country for a long term of years, to be spent in a far distant land, are subjects of severe trial to those who are strongly united by family affection. By those left behind the suffering is most keenly felt, and when the chaise bears the object of our interest and love from the door, it seems as if our very heart-strings were attached to the wheels which drag him from our sight, and there is a feeling of vacuity which we experience that even for days and weeks we cannot overcome.

The chamber which he was wont to occupy looks cheerless,

deserted, and dismantled. The empty cupboards, the chest of drawers left open and disarranged, the discarded articles of dress unfit for further use or brighter climes lie in heaps on the bed and chairs, and even the remains of boot-straps, a razor strop, scraps of paper, twine, buttons, cards, and old letters left scattered about the floor, together with a range of half-used bottles of oil, pots of bear's grease, and tooth-powder boxes, though ridiculous to assert it, are redolent with sentiment, and present to the softened eye of affection one of the most dismal and dreary spectacles, and one from which we would fain turn, though with a faint heart, from longer contemplating.

But by the absentee—the young competitor for the gifts of fortune—the separation from home and those he loves is perhaps as acutely felt at the time, but his hopes and prospects take a colouring from the sanguineness of a youthful temperament; new subjects of interest are continually presenting themselves to his view, and press on his attention; and with him the mind only occasionally falls back with regret and tenderness on the recollection of all the kind hearts and homely interests he has left behind.

The mother had felt, as she pressed her dear Edward in her arms, that it might be for the last time. She had shed no tears. She raised her eyes to heaven as if supplicating mercy and protection for her child, and a prayer that they might meet again hereafter. Not so poor Harriette; more of self might mix with her feelings. A long life probably lay before her. She looked at the sunken pallid cheek of her beloved parent. She was losing one tie—one protector, one friend—in her young brother; and the thought flashed across her mind, as she gazed with tearful eye and throbbing breast on them both, how soon perchance she might be left alone with none near to love or value her as did these dear, fond relatives. Edward had now been absent a twelve-month, and during that time no letter had reached his mother and sister to tell of his arrival in India, although several had been received from him which were written on his passage, and therefore the visits of the postman were becoming each day greater subjects of interest and anxiety.

One morning, during the midsummer vacation, Harriette was seated in the drawing-room with her mother, and beguiling the morning's task of needlework with a little

desultory, though highly interesting conversation, such as most mammas and daughters love greatly to indulge in, when the servant entered with three letters.

"Oh! my dear mamma, here at last is an Indian post-mark," exclaimed Harriette, as she eagerly took possession of the letters and examined their exterior. And here is a second also from dear Edward; one is for me and the other two are for you, mamma," and she took them across the room to her mother.

Before Harriette had concluded the perusal of her packet Mrs. Browne had quitted the apartment, but as this was a frequent practice of her parent whenever her letters were likely to contain any subject of peculiar interest, Harriette continued her agreeable occupation without appearing to notice her mother's movement.

Harriette had scarcely concluded the perusal of her brother's letter, when her mother returned to the room. She advanced towards the back of her daughter's chair, saying—

"My dear love, I have some news to impart to you, which at your early age, perhaps, will necessarily be a severe trial. For myself, I feel it only for your dear sake. This letter is to inform me that all the money which I placed, at Sir Arthur's suggestion, in the hands of Stewart and Company is gone; they are bankrupts and unable to pay anything. I have, however, such an implicit trust in that benign Providence, who has ever watched over us and blessed us, that even at this crisis I do not feel without the hope that something will open to us; the nature of which we may not be able to calculate now, but which will provide us a maintenance, and if we sink lower in the scale of worldly importance, shall we complain or be discontented at any decree of the Almighty? Let us, my love, bear it meekly and patiently, and setting aside as much as possible a worldly view of our circumstances, or the opinions which others more prosperous may form of us, let us seek only to be content with securing God's blessing.

"I have, my dear Harriette, entered thus largely on this subject for the purpose of showing you that what we are now called upon to bear is not by any means to be compared to many other kinds of trial I could name. We are still blessed in each other's society; in each other's love. We

have many kind friends—we have life, and health, and activity—and let us bless God for these mercies, and submit the future to his care. His strength is sufficient for us, and only let me see you tranquil and happy, and whether in a cottage or a palace, we may enjoy the blessings we still possess with thankfulness, and I shall wish for nothing more.”

“My dearest mother, I do not weep because we have become poor, nor that I am sorry, but because you are so very good, and because you love me so fondly. I never can be unhappy; only tell me what you wish me to do, and I hope, my dear mamma, I shall always do it. How can I be otherwise than cheerful and contented when I am with you?”

Mrs. Browne was of so calm and contemplative a habit of mind that she was able, after a few hours' reflection, to arrange her plans and decide on what was necessary to be done, and the order in which to carry them into execution.

She wrote immediately to her brother, who was now the head of the family, and since their parent's death had been in possession of the family house and property. Her youngest sister was living in the neighbourhood of Stoke, where she had married and was possessed of affluence. The other sister, formerly mentioned, was still single and resided with Mr. Ashcott and his young wife.

From the time of Mrs. Browne's marriage no great cordiality had existed between these near relatives and herself, and her removal to London had perhaps induced an indifference; added to which was a more usual one, that of their having each formed separate and nearer circles of interest. Mr. Ashcott had also expressed himself as displeased and hurt that Mrs. Browne should not have consulted with him on the propriety and expediency of her living in town; and when there is no willingness to be on friendly terms with one's relations, it is very easy to find plentiful causes of offence; so that, without any unkind words or deeds being reciprocated, a barrier seemed interposed between them, and those ties of early childhood and of fraternal affection which, from their very nature and independence, are calculated to afford us most pleasure and to last the longest, and are best fitted to stand the test of life's trials, were, as is too often the case, nearly severed, between Mrs. Browne and her nearest relatives.

It was with a painful feeling that she wrote now to the surviving members of her family, to claim their sympathy and advice, and to leave it open to them to assist her or not, as they felt disposed; yet what else could be done? They would be displeased, even if she had saved a trifle of her property, did she not write and inform them, and still the statement of her present destitution would appear like begging. It was in their power with ease to help her, and her wishes were moderate. This letter, written in a tone of gentleness and kindness, which was the only language known to one of so excellent and amiable a character as that of Mrs. Browne, was despatched by the next post to Mr. Ashcott, and at the same time one from Harriette to her beloved friend Mary, to whom, with her mother's permission, she had written an account of their sudden change of fortune.

Before any reply could reach her from her relations in the west, Mrs. Browne occupied herself with the necessary business on the spot. She intended, as quickly as she could arrange her affairs, to quit London for the country, and then, in some cheap lodging to await and see what might be done for her, and what she might do for herself. Harriette of course must leave school. She had sufficient money at command to settle all that was owing to Mrs. Durett, her landlord, and other smaller debts, and she hoped then to have something left for their journey and settlement for a short time in a moderate lodging.

She had written to Sir Arthur Falkland, to acquaint him with her loss, and received from him such a visit of commiseration as a man of kind feeling (who yet was not possessed of power over his own purse) was likely to make, when he felt that it was by his own injudicious advice that the accident had occurred. "He hoped no blame could possibly be attached to him—he had done it for the best—that such things were happening every day, and that he should always be happy to lend Mrs. Browne any trifling assistance from his purse,"—pressed her hand and that of Harriette very tenderly, and with tears in his eyes, took his leave.

Day after day passed away, and neither Lady Falkland nor Eliza came to see the Brownes. Cecile came in the day after the melancholy account had arrived, but she seemed

embarrassed and uncomfortable. Harriette asked her why she had scarcely seen anything of her during the holidays, the present being the only occasion upon which she had visited her during the many weeks which had already transpired of the vacation.

Her reply was, "Oh, dear Harriette, do not ask me; I cannot tell you; but always believe I love you, for your kindness to me. Mamma thinks I may be troublesome; she says she does not like girl friendships and gossiping as it seldom leads to good. But it is not that exactly.....but I cannot tell you," she added, with much hesitation.

Harriette was vexed and hurt at her little friend's manner, and could not understand it, and she was on the point of entering on the subject of their altered circumstances, and that she and her mother were going to leave London, when Cecile exclaimed—

"Yes, yes, dear Harriette, I know it; mamma told me of it many weeks ago, when I first came home, and I was so sorry for it. Did you only hear of it yesterday? Your uncle, Sir Arthur, told mamma. But, dearest, I must not stay now, I promised that I would not. I will come again soon. I am not sorry you are going away, Harriette, for I am so unhappy at not being allowed to come and see you; but I shall be able to write to you, and I will take care that mamma shall not see our letters. I am not comfortable. Mamma is as she used to be, before I went to school, and home is not....."

"Do not complain, dear Cecile! however unkindly, or strictly rather, your mamma treats you, still remember always that she is your mother, and strive all you can to accommodate yourself to her wishes. In most cases this will lead to a change of conduct on the part of a parent, and produce more tenderness; but if not, dearest, you must make your happiness to consist in a performance of your duty, and this, however difficult it may be at times, will yet afford you unspeakable comfort when you look back upon the efforts you have made to do your best under adverse circumstances, and will even cheer you at the time. Do not come again unless your mamma wishes it; and instead of asking for leave to do so, I would advise you to let her see your ready submission to her will, and wait till she proposes it. This she will most probably do, for in spite of the

fancies which you cannot always understand, depend on it a mamma is a mamma, all over the world; and she cannot help wishing to gratify her children, particularly when they evince a desire to comply with her decrees."

Cecile, with tears in her eyes, promised to try and do so, and the two girls took an affectionate leave of each other. Harriette was no sooner alone than she exclaimed—

"Oh, then these are the first fruits which our misfortunes have borne for me! I knew that Mrs. Vincent valued money and station more than my dear mother has taught me to do, but I did not think she would have acted thus. Knew it some weeks ago! and from Sir Arthur! and she has in consequence thought it necessary to keep her dear, simple-hearted Cecile from me in proper time."

It was with the bitterness which a first thought of this kind must ever produce on a young mind, that Harriette now wept the loss of her friend, but Cecile was not the only object of interest that arose in her mind. The locket was in her hand, and a separation from him who gave it was before her in timid fancy. Harriette was not quite right, however, as regarded the motives which produced Mrs. Vincent's conduct.

The quick-sighted mother had observed in George's letters to Cecile of late, more of a romantic tone of speech in his mention of Harriette, and in his messages to her, than exactly pleased her. The *thing* did not meet her views. George was an only son, and his mother was ambitious, and she thought few marks too high for him to aim at. Many other mammas are of the same opinion, and there are perhaps few who would acknowledge that the object of her son's affection however excellent she might be, was an equal match for him, excepting in those cases when the lady is in fact infinitely superior in birth, fortune, and education, and then she may confess herself satisfied.

With her daughters, very frequently, it is quite different; and any man who will be so kind as to provide for one of them respectably, and avert the direful catastrophe of the lovely girls "hanging on hand," is received by the delighted maternal parent with open arms.

To confirm these suspicions of her son's attachment to Harriette, a week before Cecile returned to school a letter was

received by the latter from her brother. Cecile opened it eagerly, and in doing so she dropped from it a small note which had been enclosed. Mrs. Vincent, who was looking over Cecile's shoulder, picked it up, and found that it was addressed by her son to Miss Browne. This was not to be borne, and without hesitation, she broke the seal and read as follows :

“Gibraltar.

“MY DEAR MISS BROWNE—I hope that you will not frown at my presumption in addressing a few lines to you, but I trust to return to England very shortly—at least in a few weeks after you will receive this ; I now only write in the hope of securing to myself a favourable reception. I hope you have not forgotten the happy days we passed together two years since. Sailors, I assure you, are sentimental, susceptible creatures, much more so than the landsman, who can have you always in sight. But during our night-watches, we have little else to do, but to gaze at the moon and stars, and think of home and those we love, and then we dress the ladies of our hearts in ten thousand charms and rainbow tints, till our veneration mounts to little less than idolatry, and is so firmly impressed by frequent thought, and long absences, that we are not changeable, nor fickle. The landsman has no leisure for this pastime, besides which, he can see the object of his admiration too frequently ; or he may be petted and patronized by ladies generally, which makes him fanciful and vacillating, but believe me, we may be trusted, I would rather say *I*. I did not mean to say, that imagination exaggerates your merits, for you need but to be decked in those attractions, those kind and simple virtues, with which I left you, to claim the lasting, and devoted affection of

“Your faithful,
“G. V.”

“Cecile,” said Mrs. Vincent, after she had concluded this appalling harangue, “did you see the address on this note ?”

“Yes, mamma, it was for Harriette Browne.”

“Very well ; you are right, it is for her, and it is most highly improper and indelicate, for your brother to write

such nonsense, or for Miss Browne to receive it. I shall therefore put it into the fire, and I insist on it, yes, I insist on it, that you give me a solemn promise, that you never mention having received this note, to your friend Harriette; and when your brother returns, which I expect he will do, in a few weeks, I also require that you do not speak a word to him about my having read or burnt it."

Cecile gave her mother the promise of secrecy, which she required, when the anxious mamma, endeavoured to sanction her own proceedings, by a little cautious abuse of poor Harriette, saying that "she feared she was a very bold, flighty, girl, and that she was not anxious to promote the acquaintance any further, and that school-girl friendships were very bad things."

Cecile could not agree in anything her mother said, and the conversation therefore soon ceased. The poor child was greatly hurt at her parent's evident injustice towards Harriette, as well as at the separation which was enforced rigorously between herself, and that dear kind friend. And from the time of her discovering with certainty her son's feelings towards Harriette, Mrs. Vincent had not permitted Cecile to go to Mrs. Browne's house, until the visit just related; and a morning call, not exceeding ten minutes, was the only attention which Mrs. Vincent thought it was necessary to bestow, previous to her friend's leaving town.

Mrs. Browne's letter to her brother was answered more promptly than she had expected, and the result also of her application to him was greater than she had at all anticipated. Mr. Ashcott wrote in a kind and affectionate manner. He said, that "both he and his sisters sympathised deeply in Mrs. Browne's severe loss; yet how little it lay in their power, with their family expenses, to do much for her, but that they had agreed together to allow her forty pounds a year. He approved highly of her plan of living in the country, but suggested that she had better not think of settling in their neighbourhood, particularly on account of her own feelings; and hoped that something might in the end be saved, if Stewart should ever be able to pay. He thought that Edward might soon be able to do something for her, and that he might send for his sister out to India;" and then with additional apologies, for not being

able to do more for her, his letter concluded with all sorts of kind messages from their two sisters.

This was not actual starvation, but for two persons it was little more. The same post brought the most affectionate letter from Mary, half of which sheet was addressed to Mrs. Browne by Mrs. Wilmot. It contained much heartfelt sympathy, and the kindest invitation from herself and Major Wilmot, that Mrs. Browne and Harriette would come to them without delay, and consider Duncombe a home as long as they should find it agreeable.

Tears filled poor Harriette's eyes, as she read these letters, and tenderly embracing her mother, she entreated her to go to Duncombe. "*They* are not proud, mamma, and they really mean what they say, I am sure, and we shall be able in a little time to see what can be done. Pray let us go."

Mrs. Browne agreed to this, for she had little inclination for returning to the neighbourhood of her husband's pastoral care, nor to the vicinity of her rich relations, who evidently did not wish her to do so; it therefore occurred to her, that she might meet with something to suit her near the Wilmots, whose kindly feelings towards Harriette and herself would be a great source of comfort to her poor girl.

Everything was now arranged; she had very little money left, and as Sir Arthur had been so kind in offering to assist her with a loan, she wrote to him to that effect. She received no answer from him, and yet a day or two had elapsed; Harriette, therefore, set off alone to see him, and inquire whether he was at home, and if he had received her mother's letter. She was just entering the drawing-room, when Eliza followed her, she was coming from her own room, and in full carriage costume, and was apparently on the point of setting out for some place of public and fashionable resort.

"Oh! my dear Harriette," said she, kissing her, "I hope that you have not thought mamma or me unkind, for not having been to see you, since your terrible affliction; but do you know, mamma and I are both so sensitive, we have quite dreaded seeing you, and my poor aunt. Besides which, we have been so engaged, that we have never had an hour to ourselves for weeks. We are now just setting off for the *déjeûner*, which takes place to-day at Chiswick,

and I fear now we shall be late. How do you think this dress suits me? is it not very complete?"

"My dear Eliza, I have no heart for these things, at present, and you seem to have little feeling for us; but I came on business, we are going into the country the day after to-morrow. Is my uncle at home?"

"Oh! my dear Harriette, I know what you are come about, that money. Going into the country to-morrow! I do not think that papa has it in his power at present to lend, or do anything for you, but at any rate, dear, do not ask to see him now, for we are so late we shall never be off, and I have particular reasons for wishing our carriage to go directly.....but about the money, I wish you would come again to-morrow; there, my dear, if you love me, do not stay, for if papa or mamma were to see you now, there will be so much talking and delay, that we shall not get off for half-an-hour."

Harriette was much too pained by the heartlessness of her cousin's behaviour, to wish to stay another moment in her company. Indeed her poor little heart was too full to remain, and she could not show her weakness where there was no one to sympathise, and therefore with a throbbing pulse, she descended the stairs, and left the house.

It was but a short distance from T—— Street to Portman Square, and yet Harriette had never before walked that distance alone, and she experienced a desolateness of heart, as she retraced her steps homeward, and reflected "that such were the effects of a change of fortune," having been as it were driven from the house of her fashionable and wealthy relations while petitioning a bounty! She was meditating in a melancholy way, which from being so perfectly new to her, amounted to little less than an agony of thought, when Lady Falkland's carriage overtook her. Her uncle, aunt, and cousin, looking bright and gay, and dressed in smiles, nodded to her as they passed, which from presenting a strong contrast to her own circumstances, and her present trying situation, added fresh bitterness to her feelings, and it was with difficulty that she could restrain her sobs.

She sought her own room the moment she entered her mother's house, and having relieved herself by weeping, she soon regained her wonted air of cheerfulness, and returned

to the sitting-room. She had resolved if possible, that her beloved parent should never see her shed a tear, nor imagine how deeply she might feel the loss they had sustained. To cheer and comfort her mother was now the only thought which occupied the mind of Harriette; and any one acquainted with their change of circumstances would have been perhaps surprised at the appearance of tranquil happiness, which, when together, both mother and daughter presented.

The morning after poor Harriette's painful and unsuccessful visit in Portman Square, her uncle, aunt, and Eliza, were seated at the breakfast table at a late hour, when the following conversation took place.

"My dear Sir Arthur," said Lady Falkland, "what do you intend doing about those poor Brownes? I really pity them. I cannot help liking little Harriette—poor child, her eyes were filled with tears, as she returned our recognition yesterday. Did you perceive it?"

"Yes, I did, indeed; but if you feel so much for them," replied Sir Arthur, "it seems strange to me that you have never yet been to see them, nor to offer your sympathy—if you can do nothing else for them."

"Feeling! Sir Arthur," replied his consort, languidly, "that is the very reason of my having deferred doing so. My feelings are so acute, that I cannot endure to see anyone suffer. I have perfectly dreaded an interview with Mrs. Browne. I luxuriate in seeing happy faces around me, therefore to encounter Mrs. Browne's at such a time would be most excruciating to me. At the best of times she is so demure and sad, that her presence quite depresses my spirits, for she seems to take so very little interest in the things around her. As to pleasure and amusements, I suppose she would not understand the meaning of the words; she seems always to be in mid air, and I have no wish to follow her thither. I do not understand such people—in fact, I never can like her, for we have no interests or ideas in common. As for little Harriette, I confess I feel a regard for her, she is a dear little simple affectionate girl, I could not bear to see her moped to death with that dreaming mamma of hers, and therefore I have been very kind to her, and always striven to give her any little amusement or variety in my power, and the dear girl is very grateful

to me. Besides which, she is very presentable, and I have a pleasure in taking her out with me."

"Then do you mean to tell me, that you do not intend calling on your brother's widow in her distress? They leave town to-morrow, Eliza says."

"I do not know that I may not; perhaps Eliza and I may be able to summon courage to go there this morning, if you think it right, and wish it, Sir Arthur. Shall you be able to do anything for them, or assist them in any way?"

"No! it is not in my power. How do you suppose it possible, knowing the constant expense that you and Eliza are at, with these 'necessary' nonsenses, and this entertainment that is to exceed in display that of all your acquaintance?"

"I hope, papa, you do not mean to complain of my being introduced into society in proper style?" said Eliza, looking at her mamma for support. "I suppose I am to have a little amusement like other young people, sir!"

"Yes, Eliza, a little; I would not object to a *little* amusement. I wish to see you happy, but I think you and your mamma might be reasonable. I see no advantage in our making a greater display than any of our acquaintance, nor than suits my fortune, merely to gratify a senseless vanity, and for it to be said, that 'we entertain in first-rate style;' when our good-natured visitors are certain enough to laugh at our folly behind our backs, for putting ourselves to inconvenience, by emulating the expenses of those who are infinitely our superiors in station and affluence."

"I do not know what you mean, papa, by being so unkind. I should have thought, that you might have been gratified by seeing me moving in the first circles of fashion, and holding a distinguished place among them, and not have been so particular about a few pounds, when you know it is to gratify me," and bursting into tears, she was about to leave the room.

This was a little manœuvre which had been played off too often upon the fond and doting father; she expected to have been entreated to stay—that her papa would have excused his harshness—and after giving her a kiss, have led her back again to her seat, but to her infinite surprise, he exclaimed—

"Stay, Eliza, I have a few words to say more, and then perhaps you may have better reason for crying. I am not an unkind father, nor an unkind husband, but I have acted foolishly, very foolishly, in both relations, by never having before sufficiently asserted my own position and rights."

Eliza stood with her hand on the lock of the door, apparently transfixed by this novel deportment of her father; while Lady Falkland, who had been quietly stirring her tea, and apparently deeply engaged in scrutinizing the contents of her breakfast cup, which she usually did when Sir Arthur was talking, now raised her large dark eyes, and fixing them earnestly on those of her husband, exclaimed—

"Falkland! what can be the matter? You perfectly frighten us."

"No more of such nonsense, Clara," replied Sir Arthur; "I am no longer to be intimidated or kept in silence, either by your eyes or Eliza's tears, and your astonishment now only shows me what a fool I have been hitherto, never before to have assumed my authority. I have a right to speak, and what I have to say is this—I *cannot* and I *will* not any longer live in the expensive manner which you have been urging me to of late, because I will not die in a prison, nor run from my country in debt. My fortune was handsome, and as much as you had any right to expect, and I will live within it. For the three last years I have each year very considerably exceeded my income. You talk about introducing our daughter handsomely and getting her well married. I wish to deceive no one, and I would rather see her more simply dressed and more domestic."

"Domestic, sir!" exclaimed his terrified daughter.

"Yes, domestic," he replied, "I mean more fond of home. I do not mean a domestic drudge; but as it is now, you are *ennuyée* forsooth, and ready to hang yourself if you happen to have a morning or an evening unoccupied by some amusement. Life was not given to be spent in such a way! For your sake I wished to put a stop to it, but now my finances also make it necessary to draw in."

"I suppose you will do nothing until we have been to Brighton; you do not intend to give up that," said Lady Falkland.

"Yes, I have no intention of going there. I shall shut

up or let this house for a year or more, and go to my estate in —shire."

"Surely you must be mad, Sir Arthur, to talk in that way, or to think that Eliza and I are to be buried alive in such an out-of-the-way part of the world! Besides which, you seem to forget the desirable prospect there is for establishing Eliza handsomely; every one speaks of Lord Grenville's admiration, and his devotion to her, and it is impossible to be mistaken about his feelings."

"Lord Grenville!" exclaimed Sir Arthur, reddening with rage, and striking the table as he spoke, "Lord Grenville, an impudent rascal! Have you invited him for Thursday?"

"Yes—but good heavens! Sir Arthur, what is the matter?"

"Matter enough; he shall never enter these doors again, and if he shows his face here, very probably I shall horse-whip him out again!"

"Pray be calm, my dear," said Lady Falkland, "your unjust anger and impetuosity may ruin Eliza's prospects and happiness."

"If her happiness is staked on his lordship doubtless it will be sacrificed, and I can tell her that my daughter has no right to look so high as Lord Grenville for a husband, nor would such an union ever be productive of happiness to either party. But she shall not be insulted by him. I never thought to have heard or seen anything of him again, as I was told he was going on the Continent. I shall take care to prevent his coming here again, and I insist on it, if you have any regard for yourselves that you only recognize him in the coldest and most distant manner, should you happen to meet him elsewhere. I accidentally overheard him in conversation with a friend, while in the gardens the other day, when he spoke of us in a manner that makes my blood boil to think of. He called Eliza 'the pretty simpleton,' adding, 'that he must go and have some fun with her,' and when his companion expostulated, by saying, 'if he did not take care he would go too far,'

"'Too far!' said his lordship, 'oh! no, trust me for that; on these occasions I go as far as I can, and if I get hooked, why I tell the governor, and he takes up the matter for me, calls on the parents of the lady, puts himself

in a rage at the imprudence of youth, takes all the *onus* on himself, of putting a stop to the affair, and sends me for a few months on the Continent, with my character for sincerity perfectly clear !”

“ So he is in the habit, you see, of tampering with the feelings of those young ladies who are weak enough to be duped ; but the rascal shall have no further opportunities of trifling with Eliza !”

Lady Falkland turned very pale at this recital of her husband's, and Eliza quitted the room in tears. They were both considerably mortified at the failure of their pet scheme of ambition, for a great deal had been sacrificed in the pursuit of it, and on his lordship's account chiefly had the preparations for a very superb entertainment been set on foot.

A few hours, however, were sufficient for Eliza to rearrange her plans, and settle many important affairs connected with her conduct and dress on the approaching occasion. We have before observed that she did not possess that organ which is so prejudicial and inconvenient to all the chances of “ settling well in life,” a heart. Other conquests “ she remembered ” were to be achieved, even if one had failed, and she was determined to shine supreme, if art and energy could serve her : and could she but succeed in persuading her father to allow Lord Grenville still to come to their party, the game would be in her own hands, and she might gratify her pride, and sufficiently revenge herself upon him, by openly slighting his attentions. This must effectually wound his self-love and vanity, for he was so accustomed to having his most trifling notice received with smiles from all whom he was wont to favour, that an opposite line of conduct would, when so little expected, probably cause him great annoyance. This would be her victory ! “ his assiduities, would of course, be as unremitting on Thursday, as usual.”

“ How delightful,” she thought, “ to be engaged, when he solicited her hand, to be gay and pleased with everyone save him, and all her friends would see that the change was on her part, and probably conclude that she had rejected him. This must be managed, and she should then be happy ; for Lord Grenville had no idea of her father's vicinity to him, at the time when he had spoken of her in so impertinent a manner.

Thus concluded Eliza's cogitations; and while she was employing herself in healing the wounds of disappointment and mortified pride, by means of a public retaliation, her father and mother having soothed their feelings by eating a little more breakfast, Sir Arthur re-commenced the conversation, in a gentler tone as follows—

"I had no intention when I began, of speaking of this fellow, but of your poor sister-in-law, Mrs. Browne; I cannot tell you what remorse I feel in the reflection, that the preposterous extravagance which I have permitted, of late has put it out of my power to be of any essential service to her and my little niece. Will you not call on them, with Eliza, this morning, and apologize for not having done so before?"

"No, really, Falkland, I assure you, I cannot, after the unusual agitation of this morning, bear any further excitement."

"Then unless this is done, I will have no party here on Thursday. What will your friends think, since you esteem their opinions of so much weight and importance, what will they think of such heartless conduct? I do not wish to appear harsh, but I must beg that you will comply with this request of mine. I shall call on Mrs. Browne at about two o'clock, and I shall hope that you will meet me there."

He then left the room, and Lady Falkland after having a little recovered from the species of stupefaction (like one awakening from a strange dream) produced by this unlooked-for conduct on the part of her hitherto docile husband, speedily arranged in her own mind that the best policy would be to comply, and that readily, with her husband's wishes, and that to carry forward his plans of kindness, or even to anticipate them, would be the only method by which she could regain her ascendancy over him. As to his thus carrying all before him, after years of good-natured pliancy to her wishes and fancies, to begin now to play the despot, was a thing she never thought for one moment of permitting. A little tact, therefore, was necessary, she must appear to yield submissively to his wishes, and to humour, for a time, at least, this new crotcheth of Sir Arthur's, of wielding the domestic sceptre; she felt convinced that this was the only and the surest way of winning back his kindness, and regaining her power.

Resistance would be vain, and only serve to make matters worse. The idea of putting off the ball was of course "preposterous and impracticable," and therefore, she gave little heed to that threat of Sir Arthur's. She accordingly rang the bell, and on inquiry of the servant, found that his master was gone out. She ordered her carriage to be ready at one, and then went to seek her daughter.

She found Eliza busily engaged in contemplating the dress to be worn on the coming Thursday, and talking in a cheerful tone to her maid, about the respective merits of the contents of her wardrobe.

Having dismissed the attendant, Lady Falkland congratulated Eliza, on "not having given way to her feelings, nor made her eyes red with weeping. It is very provoking to be sure, but these things will happen to such a girl as you are," added her mother, "and this is one of the penalties, which our sex must pay for being beautiful and admired. It is something to boast of, nevertheless, that Lord Grenville has bestowed on you so much attention in public, and we must hope that something more fortunate will soon occur."

Eliza mentioned the triumph which she had planned for herself. Her mamma was delighted, and assured her, that if for a day or two, she would comply with every wish of her's, and her father's, that she would undertake to manage, and bring Sir Arthur round to consent to all they wished, as well as to his lordship's presence on Thursday evening.

She divulged to Eliza the plan she had formed for gratifying Sir Arthur, and having desired her to be ready to accompany her on a visit to Mrs. Browne, the mother and daughter separated. The carriage was at the door at the appointed hour, and the ladies being dressed, soon after found themselves in Mrs. Browne's dismantled drawing-room. Travelling trunks and boxes of various dimensions filled the passages, and when Lady Falkland and her daughter entered the room, Harriette and her mother were occupied in packing up the last of those decorations, ornaments, and feminine implements of industry, music, drawings, and books, which add an elegance as well as an appearance of comfort to the apartments occupied by ladies. The meeting was exceedingly cordial on the part of Lady Falkland and Eliza; and

Mrs. Browne, ever ready to think kindly, and attribute the best motives to the actions of others (suspicion and distrust of their sincerity having never found a home in her tranquil bosom), received this visit with warmth and gratitude; she even anticipated, and interrupted Lady Falkland's apologies for not having been to see her before, by saying, "she knew how fully her time was always occupied, and that her other friends had a right to expect her attention."

With Harriette it was different; sensitively alive to any thing which approached towards neglect of her mother she reddened to a most painful degree, and almost shrunk from the proffered kiss which was bestowed upon her forehead, by her apparently patronising aunt. To have deferred this visit of "charity," until the last few hours they were to remain in town, she thought was extremely inconsiderate and unkind, and might as well have been omitted altogether. Lady Falkland endeavoured to lead her little favourite to talk, but scarcely a syllable could escape the lips of Harriette in reply, for with every effort to speak, and each time of being addressed, the fresh tide of blood suffused her face.

Lady Falkland was evidently pained and embarrassed by this change in her once free and simple-hearted little *protégée*, and therefore turned to bestow on Mrs. Browne her kindness and sympathy so as to conceal the chagrin she felt. She found her sister-in-law tranquil, and as cheerful in her own placid way as usual. Mrs. Browne entered freely on the subject of her loss, and spoke of the kindness of her brother and sisters, adding that she hoped she and Harriette should be contented, for that she doubted not something might occur for their good by and by. She also said, that she was sorry to have troubled Sir Arthur by asking for a loan of ten pounds, but believed now, that she should have enough for all immediate expenses.

"A loan of ten pounds, my dear Emily, you forget that I am your husband's sister.

The mention of this name caused a internal shudder in the widow's frame, which could not escape Lady Falkland's observation, and interrupted her in her discourse. She had spoken of that relation carelessly, and the widow had not

been accustomed to hear him even referred to ; her husband dwelt ever in her thoughts, but with reference to all external things, he had ceased to exist. He was enshrined within her heart of hearts, and thither the rough speech as it seemed of a stranger had sought him, and the pain was as acute as if a knife had pierced her there. After a moment, yet still while Mrs. Browne's cheek was of a paler hue, and her blanched lips still tightly compressed, Lady Falkland continued.

"So closely related as we are, dear Emily, how could you think of asking a loan of so trifling an amount? You will think it strange, that in the apparent style in which Sir Arthur lives, that we should have so very little ready money ; but every condition brings with it its contingent expenses ; and on my daughter's account Sir Arthur has wished to do as much for her amusement and advantage as might be, and we are in consequence a little behind hand just at present. I wish we could do something really serviceable to you, and dear Harriette, but I assure you it is not in our power ; with Sir Arthur's consent, and by his wish, I have brought you ten pounds if you will accept so poor a gift."

"You are very kind," replied Mrs. Browne, while something like a tear flowed and rested on her eyelashes, "but can you really, without inconvenience, spare it? I know that people are not always rich who live in the gayest style, and you must have so many demands on your purse."

Lady Falkland pressed it on her sister-in-law, and then led off the conversation in a more audible tone saying, that she came with the hope also of persuading Mrs. Browne, and "her dear little niece," to come and spend the day with them. That she had expressly put off an engagement which they had to dine with Lady Penelope Diston, and hoped that they would comply ; begged them not to "think about appearance, for that they should be quite alone, and assured them that the dresses they were going to travel in would be quite sufficient."

Mrs. Browne seemed greatly to feel and appreciate this kind attention, and looking at her daughter, asked her whether she would like to go, and Harriette having never known any other wish, than to comply with her mother's pleasure, the invitation was accepted.

At this moment, Sir Arthur, without waiting to be announced, opened the drawing-room door, and on perceiving his wife and daughter there, and all talking agreeably, he could not refrain from giving his wife a smile of approbation, after having very cordially shaken hands with Mrs. Browne and Harriette. Lady Falkland told him of her having put off their engagement with Lady Penelope, and that Mrs. Browne and Harriette had consented to spend the day with them. Sir Arthur smiled immense satisfaction and applause at this arrangement, and having shaken hands all round once more (his wife and daughter being included, to give vent to his feelings of satisfaction), he congratulated himself on the pleasure of this family meeting, and at length sat down.

Harriette still continued very silent, and remained in the back ground, but the frank good nature and kindness of her uncle gradually drew her out. He was in a very happy mood himself, and it is very astonishing how infectious happiness is. The widow presented a very different aspect from what Lady Falkland and Eliza had anticipated. The conversation soon became general, and various topics were introduced, so that the misfortunes of the Brownes were soon forgotten by themselves as well as by their guests.

The four ladies returned together, after a short drive in the park, to Portman Square, where neither kind words nor attentions were wanting on either side to make the day pass pleasantly. Harriette was the only one in really low spirits, and it was with a strong effort only that she was enabled to conceal her feelings which, on her mother's account, she strove to do, so as to appear almost cheerful at times; but when she had returned home, and retired to rest, her pillow was wet with tears, which continued to flow even after she had fallen asleep.

The travellers were to start early on the morrow by coach for Dorsetshire, and they therefore concluded their visit in Portman Square at an early hour. Lady Falkland gave Harriette a little ring as a memento, and Eliza begged her acceptance of a gauze handkerchief which she had worn, the which favour Harriette felt a strong inclination to refuse.

"God bless you, my dear child!" said her uncle at parting, "and if at any time you should be in any difficulties or distress, do not fail to let me know, and if I can help you

with my advice or protection I shall be happy to render it; and if I have a shilling only in the world you shall share it with me."

He slipped a five pound note into her hand, and giving her a second blessing they parted.

The apparent honest and warm-hearted manner of her uncle gave Harriette sincere pleasure, and his affectionate and fatherly farewell almost overcame her in the present excited state of her feelings. There was to her quick sight a very great difference between his manner and that of her aunt and cousin, although she could not precisely say what it was. Neither of the ladies had been wanting in attention towards her, nor in expressions of kindness; she almost blamed herself for being "dissatisfied, or perhaps fanciful." But without cause, for it was the difference which we cannot help *feeling*, though it may not perhaps be very palpable, of conduct which flows freely from the kindly dictates of the heart and that which is assumed for the purpose of carrying forward some selfish politic design. There is an instinct in the perception of truth and of real feeling which can never be deceived.

CHAPTER XVII.

Without any striking incident the travellers on the following morning quitted London, and reached Duncombe House, where they were received with the warmest cordiality. Numberless were the little instances of kindness which met Mrs. Browne and her daughter at every turn, and showed that much thought had been bestowed to provide every trifling luxury which could afford comfort or pleasure to the valued friends and visitors.

Two apartments adjoining each other were prepared for the mother and daughter, overlooking most lovely scenery. Harriette in her room quickly found traces of the affectionate love of her friend Mary. Her favourite books were placed on the shelves; a bouquet of fresh and beautiful flowers was on the little table which, covered with its pretty cloth, contained all the materials necessary for writing. Harriette looked out upon the park, and around her room, and without being able to speak, fell on her friend's shoulders and wept her thankfulness, and relieved the fulness of her poor young heart. A few weeks' anxiety and sorrow had already made a change in her appearance and manner. Mary felt painfully for her friend. Harriette was not weak in disposition; she had great good feeling and great energy, but as she would never give way before her mother, and had hitherto no kind friend at hand into whose ear to pour her tale, or from whom to seek advice or sympathy, her heart had gradually accumulated its own sad thoughts, which were now called forth, and found a vent in the presence and kindness of her dearest friend.

He oft finds medicine who his grief imparts,
But double griefs afflict concealing *harts*
As raging flames who striveth to *suppresse*.

It was on the evening of a sultry day, in the middle of July, that this happy meeting took place; a room facing the north had been selected for the evening meal, and only such of the elder young people, whose propriety and discretion could be depended on, were admitted. To Mrs. Browne the sight of the country always afforded the most lively pleasure; and the change now from the confined and heated air of the metropolis, with its heartless bustle, to the pure air and perfect tranquillity of this spot, was not unfelt by her and Harriette.

This room overlooked a retired part of the lawn, or park; clumps of trees were scattered here and there, the remains of what apparently had in times past formed an avenue. Here, during the heat of the day, the cattle came for shelter, and now that the setting sun was pouring its slant beams upon the landscape, the cows and a few sheep and deer were dispersing themselves to a distance, or might be seen standing in pools of still water. Such was the scene of tranquillity and repose without, and of kindness and hospitality within, which greeted the Brownes after their wearying journey.

The table was spread with all that was requisite; the garden fruits, the fresh produce of the dairy, and a profusion of beautiful flowers, adding a coolness and fragrance to the repast. None but those who have experienced the change, from a town residence in the dog days to such a scene as this, can be made to understand the pure and simple luxury which is enjoyed by those who know and love the country.

Two or three days were past, during which every painful thought of their loss and of their change of circumstances seemed to have been forgotten, or for the present laid aside by the visitors, that they might fully enjoy the delights of their rural abode. In fact it would have been most unthankful to have pined and looked sad in the midst of so much kindness, and with all the outward appliances and means of happiness, even had such been the natural tendency of their dispositions, but both mother and daughter felt it their duty and their inclination to make the best of their adverse fortune. And Harriette, having disburdened her heart to her sympathizing friend, was now as cheerful as ever.

What a magic effect has a little gossip, and how success-

ful a remedy is that feminine recipe for all the evils in life—a little confidential chatter! Certainly the ladies' mental safety-valve is the mouth. It is not sympathy that seems always necessary to them; a good listener only is the essential desideratum. To talk—to hear themselves talk—and to be heard by others to talk—seems frequently to be sufficient, and the friend who has joined a favourite coterie, oppressed with sadness and drooping beneath a load of care, encourage her but to talk—lead her gently on until the words flow freely, she will soon become animated, and will leave the party quite another creature, ready even to contend with any new trial that may await her. This peculiar disease has been denominated “a determination of words to the mouth,” and there are so few listeners of her own sex, that many a poor woman languishes under this unknown distemper and unconscious of the cure.

Harriette had not seen the sea since she was very young, although the place of her birth was not far distant from the coast; yet Mr. and Mrs. Browne so seldom quitted the village which occupied their care, and interested their feelings, that Harriette was a mere child when she last visited a watering place. She was now within a short distance of the ocean, and was greatly desirous to see it again. It was therefore determined that the two friends should take an early walk to the beach and rocks at C—.

Two of Mary's brothers volunteered to escort them, but this attention was politely declined by Mary, who told them that she and Harriette had something very particular to talk of, but that they should be glad of their company on another occasion. The truth was that Harriette had a secret plan to divulge to her friend, of whom also she wished to seek advice, for Mary's judgment might, she thought, be depended on, and she was a year or two older than herself. This was no other than to suggest the expediency and propriety of her immediately setting about maintaining herself, and thus relieving her mother of her chief burthen and anxiety, by going out as a teacher or a governess.

After many struggles with her own heart, Harriette had arrived at the conviction that this had now become a necessary duty, and she had thought much upon it from the day the news of their loss first reached them, but had never

mentioned it to her mother, although she felt that such a proposal ought properly to come from herself.

She had thought of consulting her kind uncle Sir Arthur, but it occurred to her that it might appear as if she wished to obtain from him assistance, which would enable her to live with her mother; but in youth, with her powers and energies equal to supporting herself, she felt she should be wrong in burthening others with her maintenance. Her mother's annuity was to cease at her death, and sooner or later she must depend on her own exertions; and even if the strictest economy was practised, two persons could with difficulty subsist on eighty pounds a-year, and all which she shared would only be depriving her mother of her necessary comforts.

The morning commenced very auspiciously for the projected ramble in search of the picturesque; and the sun had not long risen to gladden the face of nature with his benignant smile, when Mary repaired to her friend's chamber. She found Harriette lying in a half conscious, half dormant state, a kind of delicious twilight of sensation (if it may be so expressed) chasing many a broken vision of bliss which floated across her fancy. These dreams were no doubt inspired by a slight conviction of the real enjoyment which, heightened by all the charms of novelty, surrounded her in this lovely country. Our nature is scarcely susceptible of a more exquisite enjoyment than this happy suspension between wild imagery and truth, when all the painful realities of life are banished or shut out, and peace and love and poetry are the undisturbed possessors of the breast.

Mary drew aside the curtain, and the too sleepy Harriette, rather feeling her friend's presence than seeing or hearing her, lifted her eyelids, and having caught a sight of the sweet face and figure that hung over her, in very weariness closed them again, perhaps to dream of her guardian angel. Her friend, however, evinced little sympathy for such selfish indulgence, and having, in addition to a little persecution, reminded her of their intended excursion, Harriette was soon roused and equipped.

The sun streamed gaily through the interstices of the ivied lattice window, which now thrown open admitted the fresh breeze, together with the cheerful song of the birds

who had obeyed the summons of the morn more readily than our drowsy little friend. The gently blowing wind rustled amongst the trees and shrubs, producing a tremulous movement in each leaf and blossom, and thus aiding it in shaking off its nightly tear. The gay flowers spread their soft bosoms to the genial sun, offering their freshest and most fragrant perfumes, which the attendant breezes gently wafted to his shrine.

It would be difficult to describe Harriette's feelings when she found herself on the green turf of the meadows which led to the sea-shore. The clear invigorating breeze came full in their faces, everything looked bright and gay, and even the rainbow tints from the dewdrops, which hung glittering on every leafy spray, seemed more than usually brilliant. In such a scene of picturesque beauty and loveliness as that which the two friends were now witnessing, the question naturally arises "must evil necessarily exist in so glorious and beautiful a world?"

It was all so new, and yet so closely linked with the cherished recollections of childhood, that Harriette could not talk; her heart was too full, too far elevated above the ordinary tone of feeling, her thoughts seemed to her far too sacred for utterance, and she could not quit the luxury of such contemplations to enter even on the ordinary topics of conversation which might have arisen from the scenery around.

Her considerate guide sympathised and, perhaps, shared in these feelings; she therefore refrained from interrupting Harriette's enjoyment by breaking the train of thought which might arise, and they therefore walked on a considerable way before either of them felt disposed to speak.

The pathway, now emerging from a wood, brought them suddenly in front of a splendid view opening upon the sea. This was not the direct way, but Mary, anxious to display their lovely neighbourhood to the greatest advantage, had by a slightly circuitous route, so contrived, that sudden contrast should add to the natural beauties of the spot; and she had therefore conducted Harriette through low, fertile ground, shut out by a thick wood from every prospect of rock and sea which lay in its immediate vicinity, until the wildest and most diversified scenery burst at

once upon their view.¹ Over the cliffs hung a thick mist, which the sun slowly penetrating, broke into large masses that continued undulating along the sides of the acclivities until gradually absorbed and lost. The sea was rough, and of a deep blue, which formed a brilliant contrast with the white foam that was dashed violently by the waves against the craggy rocks. On the left lay the little town. The hill on which it was built, declining with a gentle slope, projected far into the sea, so that a clear sky beyond presented it in full relief; a dark shade was thrown from a passing cloud over the town, interrupted only here and there by the white faces of a few detached houses, and the neighbouring cliffs which caught and reflected the sunbeams. Several ships lay scattered over the bay, whilst others with their white sails displayed, seemed bearing down on the diminutive fishing boats like gigantic birds, as if marking and ready to seize their prey.

This view, partaking rather of the bold and picturesque, had not the same effect on Harriette's feelings as the softer and less wild scenery had produced, and after pausing a moment, she exclaimed most enthusiastically—

“How truly glorious, my dear Mary!” and after this effort she appeared to breathe more freely, for admiration and wonder, strange to say, always affect one's breath, and produce taciturnity!

“It is really a most splendid sight,” replied her friend, “and I am particularly indebted to it on the present occasion, as being the means at length of breaking the icy silence of your tongue. I almost began to despair of ever hearing your sweet voice again. I am also much pleased that you have now confirmed an idea that has frequently occurred to me, that *sublime* scenery excites an awe or grandeur of thought, which as it fails to rouse the softer sympathies, leaves the mind at perfect liberty to offer its homage. You could therefore readily utter its praises, while, on the contrary, the tranquil charms of the beautiful

¹ This is not the general character of this coast, but only descriptive of that part which joins Devonshire; where in a few spots the fertile beauty of that county, approaches close upon the sea-shore, and blends with the bleak and sterner scenery which distinguishes Dorsetshire.

and picturesque harmonizing with each chord of feeling, engross the heart, and paralyze the organ of speech. Had I not on former occasions analyzed my own sensations I might have imagined you as being more affected by the grand! It may, however, produce a contrary effect on minds differently constituted."

Harriette having never applied herself to making such nice distinctions was rather appalled, at what she felt to be a species of "blueism" in her friend, and uttered only an uncomfortable and meaningless "yes." Mary did not add to her friend's evident embarrassment by appearing to expect more than this unsatisfactory monosyllable, but continued immediately—

"We will, if you please, wait to see the fishing boats come in, as it is a very pretty sight, after which we can return by the old ruins, which are well worthy of a visit, and will form a variety in our walk."

The fishermen soon reached the shore, and drawing their boats upon the shingle, quickly transferred to the carts that stood in attendance their still leaping, glittering cargo, which was then to be conveyed to the neighbouring markets.

Harriette and Mary were on the point of turning to leave the shore when two young men jumped suddenly from a projecting piece of the cliff behind them, upon the shingle, with so much noise as to startle the young ladies very considerably; and to their infinite surprise continued rattling at a quick pace over the stones, as they hastened towards the spot where the girls were standing. Neither Mary nor Harriette recognised the faces of the strangers, who from their manner of approach were apparently known to them.

The name of "Mary" uttered by the foremost, though the shortest, of the two young men, as soon as he was within ear-shot, led her immediately to discover her sailor brother Frederick, who was nearly grown out of knowledge, and to the far greater surprise of both parties, and their no slight flutter and agitation, Harriette found herself in the presence of George Vincent, and George Vincent as unexpectedly discovered himself to be in the presence of Miss Browne.

Although the conversation which ensued very much resembled the childish game of "cross question and crooked

answer," and neither party could perhaps have repeated what questions had been asked, or what had been the replies; yet Harriette and George understood with perfect satisfaction that they were both exceedingly happy in thus unexpectedly seeing each other, and the interesting embarrassment evinced on their countenances (and which may be sufficiently explained by the suddenness of so unlooked for a meeting) told a great deal more than the most eloquent harangue could have done. It was the very aroma of happiness. In each other's presence all appeared *couleur de rose*, for with them the young days were still smiling around them, when they could indulge their fairy dreams of loving and being loved, without one thought beyond—but hope! How much more ethereal and exquisite in its nature is this unuttered love; for the first word spoken seems to break the spell, as surely as the first sniff of morn will melt a ghost into thin air; and dull reality is then to be substituted for all the imagery and poetry of feeling.

In less time than it takes to describe the meeting, Harriette and George had recovered their equanimity, and were conscious only that they were extremely happy—Mary and her brother felt greatly pleased at their re-union, and the ceremony of introduction had taken place, Frederick having been duly presented to Miss Browne, and George to Miss Wilmot. The cause also of George's unexpected appearance in that neighbourhood was next fully explained.

The young men had gone out in the same ship—the last time they had left England, and had become great friends; so much so, that when their ship touched at Plymouth, Wilmot easily prevailed on George to accompany him to Duncombe, to spend a couple of days with him, on his way to town. For one very sufficient reason, Frederick had never talked of his sister's being at Forester House, or something might have led to George's discovering that Wilmot's sister was Harriette's great friend; and therefore his surprise at meeting her now, when he least thought of seeing anyone he knew, was very great, and equalled only by the pleasure he experienced.

The party left the shore, including in their road homeward a visit to the remains of the old castle. Harriette and George did not appear to take much interest in external things, and were both too busily engaged, perhaps, in the

building of their own aerial castles, to be at liberty to think much about the old stone and mortar relics which lay scattered around them. For the sake of the more rational among mankind, however, we shall take the liberty of giving a slight sketch of this spot.

The site of this desolate building commanded an extensive view of the surrounding country, which lay as in a panorama, offering every diversity of character; the open sea on the one side, with its bounding rocks, whose commanding frown seems to hold sway over the boisterous waves; the extensive black downs stretching away in the distance, but formally relieved by the cold chalky roads which wind through their extent of unbroken gloom, the peaceful and highly-cultivated valley beneath, showing here and there a cluster of white smiling cottages, each with its little plot of garden ground; and the steeple of the village church peeping from among the trees, to point out the sanctuary of peace. The busy movements of the industrious inhabitants, going merrily to their various employments, completed this delightful scene.

Little now remains of the castle to tell its former strength and grandeur—one tower only has withstood the ravages of time; a few tottering walls seem depending for support on the luxuriant ivy which envelopes and appears to sustain them in its vigorous embrace, as if in gratitude for the help which it received in infancy when it raised its first tender fibres supplicating the aid it now affords.

The whole ruin was desolate enough; but it was the ordinary triumph of time. The poet draws a moral from its ruined towers; the artist sketches them; the romantic sigh; the thoughtless look grave, and then the castle is consigned to some obscure corner of memory, along with twenty other ruins. But there is one tower that to the few who penetrate to it, for it lies almost buried in wood where for sixty years no axe had come, offers an image of desolation intensely felt and long remembered.

This is not the work of time, for the walls and part of the roof are entire. Some parts of the glazed windows yet remain, and the stone steps that lead to the tower retain their sharp angles and scarce-worn surface, where moss and lichen do not break their outline. The pathway which once led around it may still be traced among the lank grass and

nettles—the thick foliage makes the air heavy and oppressive ; yet beautiful colours and forms were there. The wall-flower and sweet-william peeped from beneath the hemlock, and the graceful lily appeared more dazzlingly white by the side of the bright red berries which hung from the wreathed nightshade.

Little of life was there—the newt, indeed, dwelt safely in his tiny cavern, and on a sunny day the wasps were speeding to and fro—many a nest had they made undisturbed by the tread of strangers—or the slow worm might be seen to wind his varying, graceful curve, through the bed of sweet violets, as he basked in the noon-day sun. The rich ripe blackberries might be seen in the autumn hanging in clusters, yet the poor children never venture hither to gather them, and no guide is necessary to tell that this place is haunted. Even Harriette and George's attention was rivetted, on reaching this spot, and Mary told them that it was a general belief in the neighbourhood that this part was the favourite resort of some ghosts, who either as a penalty for some sin committed there were bound to walk for a certain number of years, or from early association or local attachment, or an appreciation of such lovely scenery, were loth to quit the spot, even when their bodies were mouldering in the dust. She added, that those persons who had been compelled by duty (for none had ever gone willingly) to pass near it at night, had told of strange sights and sounds, of loud clear voices in converse ; but it was no earthly language which they spoke—none ever understood the meaning of those words, and none dared listen to them a second time.

The young people, gratified by a sight of this wreck of time, and having seen enough, returned to their breakfasts. The young men had arrived at a late hour on the preceding night, and the meeting of this numerous family and of their visitors at the morning meal, was productive of great pleasure. Two days George remained at Duncombe ; how willingly would he have stayed longer, but that his mother and Cecile would be anxiously expecting him in town.

There was so much tranquillity in the feelings which existed between George and Harriette after their first meeting, that no one had observed "anything particular," as ladies mildly term a love affair. Harriette was so simple and unaffected, and the attachment between them was so

like that of brother and sister, that Harriette knew not how deeply her feelings were interested, until George had taken his departure. The parting, perhaps, served to clear the visual organs of both on this subject, and they then perceived how painful it was to part so soon. The exchange on the preceding evening of a small bouquet, in which a rose-bud and myrtle sprig were conspicuous, was the only approach to sentiment on the part of these young lovers. No reference was made by George to his note, and yet he discovered from Harriette's surprise at his being in England that she could not have received it; besides which, she seemed so unconscious of the extent of his devotion. Mr. Browne had not thought it necessary to tell young Vincent of their change of circumstances, and Harriette had too much delicacy, or was too happy, to think of mentioning it to him herself, and she might feel assured that he would hear it from his mother as soon as he reached home. She had talked to George of Cecile, and sent some kind messages to her; but owing to Mrs. Vincent's extraordinary conduct in never having taken any notice of her and her mother, Harriette thought it best not to address her young friend by letter, but to wait until Cecile should write first to her, which she requested George to desire her to do as soon as she felt disposed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

George Vincent was no sooner gone than Harriette began to reflect on the position which they held with regard to each other. It was impossible for her not to feel convinced of the nature and extent of George's attachment to her, and to perceive also within the secret recesses of her own heart the deep interest he had excited in return. She had entertained no thought while he was present but of placid tranquil happiness, and she never dreamed that she loved him otherwise than as a friend or brother—one whose society caused her pleasure and whose absence would produce no pain. But now that he was gone, with what bitterness did she discover that she had been mistaken—that he was indeed everything to her—and that the love which he had made no efforts to conceal was to her invaluable; and that at the time when she most dearly prized, and felt his attachment most essential to her happiness, duty seemed to require of her that all thought of him should be for ever utterly relinquished.

The fancied cause of Mrs. Vincent's neglect of herself and her mother was still fresh in Harriette's memory. How would she then approve of her only son, who at some future period would be in possession of a good fortune, attaching himself to one without money? One whom necessity would soon compel to seek her own support as a governess, in which capacity, in the eyes of all worldly-minded people, she must so surely lose caste. Could she for his own sake allow him to think of one in such a grade of life as her's would shortly be, even had not his mother's pride and the importance which she attached to fortune and station been already sufficiently displayed by her unfeeling conduct? If Mrs. Vincent would not allow

her little Cecile still to be her friend, how would she feel did she suspect that any attachment existed between the despised Harriette and her darling son?

Such was the tenor of Harriette's thoughts; and with these reflections pride arose to her assistance; and can there be a more effectual antidote to the softer passion than is to be found in our own self-love and self-esteem? If these are wounded in the slightest degree all tenderness of feeling seems for the time banished from the breast.

But poor Harriette was not permitted to indulge in these sentiments above a few minutes; yet, during that short period, she had gained so much courage that it seemed almost an easy task to forget one whose family would object to her, and who himself influenced by their arguments, might soon perhaps be taught to be indifferent also. She resolved that she would not be the one who should the longest encourage and retain any sentiment of preference. She paused a moment to admire her own fortitude when, unconsciously, and in a fit of seeming apathy, memory presented to her view the last scene of parting—flinging into the ideal picture the brightest moments they had passed together, fraught with kind looks and words of love. Where was now her boasted valour? The phantasmagoria was gone and had carried with it all her heroism.

Then how did she blame herself "that these suggestions (whether of pride or prudence) had not occurred to her before George had quitted her. She had been blinded while he was present to every feeling save the consciousness of enjoyment. Had she reflected at that time she would have perceived the danger to which they were both exposed, and she might at that period have discouraged his attentions. But now, when time had served only to develope and confirm their mutual feelings, how hard would be the task of subduing them!" For her own sake she felt that they must no longer be encouraged, and yet her thoughtlessness had involved in some degree the peace of mind of one whose happiness was as dear to her as her own. With regard to George she could now do nothing, he might soon forget her—they might never meet again—and she almost dared to wish that such would be the case—that he might meet with one more fortunate—but no, her heart recoiled from such a thought, she could not contemplate it; she leant her head

forward, and clasping her throbbing temples with her slender hands, burst into a passion of tears.

She presently thought that she heard some one approaching the room where she was seated, and anxious at such a moment to escape observation, she stepped from the window that opened upon the lawn, and sought the retirement of the nearest shrubbery. She had only taken a few turns, and was a little recovered from her agitation by the fresh air and the exertion she had made, when she saw her mother, Mrs. Wilmot, and Mary coming towards her. Unfortunately, tears will linger on the eyelash longer than we would sometimes wish them, leaving behind a tell-tale glow, after the anguish which called them from their secret cell has sunk into repose. She endeavoured to avoid a meeting by turning into a side path, when her mother stepped forward.

"Where are you going Harriette? will you not join us, my dear?"

"Yes, mamma, but I was thinking of sitting in the arbour," replied Harriette, hesitatingly.

"You had better fetch your bonnet and come with us; yet, my love," continued Mrs. Browne, putting her arm within that of her daughter's, and looking anxiously in her face, "you appear to have been weeping; is anything the matter, dearest?"

"Oh no," replied Mrs. Wilmot, advancing and passing her hand gently over Harriette's flushed forehead, as if to lay aside some stray locks, "this fresh air has made her eyes a little red, and the hair has assisted in irritating them. My dear, Mary has lost sight of you for the last hour nearly, and is quite dispirited in consequence. Shall we leave the young friends together, Mrs. Browne, and continue our ramble?" and offering her arm as she spoke, she led off the too inquisitive mamma from making any further investigations.

Harriette felt exceedingly grateful for the kindness of Mrs. Wilmot, and was pleased by the delicate manoeuvre which had thus freed her from a scrutiny at such a moment, when it might have overcome the philosophy which she had hitherto been so well able to sustain in her mother's presence.

Harriette and Mary dropped behind the matrons, and

were followed in the distance by Major Wilmot, his five younger girls, and his little boy, who were all at high play together. The children had fairly hunted down their respected parent; until the good-natured old officer was gasping for breath, and nearly suffocated with laughter at this unwonted exertion, while the merry brats were pulling him by his arms and legs, and the tails of his coat, their happy faces turned up to his with the view of ascertaining how far they might carry their jokes with impunity.

The purpose of the expedition upon which the ladies were now bent was to seek for some lodging in the neighbourhood of Duncombe, suited to the present limited means of Mrs. Browne, and upon condition that papa and the young ones should conduct themselves decorously, they were also permitted to follow in the distance. Harriette, having arranged her dress for an evening walk, rejoined the party, and Mary, not having appeared to notice her previous discomposure, the two friends were soon conversing with their usual cheerfulness and freedom, while Mrs. Browne was endeavouring to explain to Mrs. Wilmot the sort of accommodation she was about to seek.

"Two small rooms in a farm-house I should prefer," said she, "a parlour and bedroom. I cannot keep a servant, of course, and Harriette and I must be contented to do many things of which at present we are rather ignorant. The woman of the house must also, for a trifling addition, perform for us such offices as we cannot do for ourselves. I hope my poor Harriette will not feel the change, and yet I fear she must do so; I think she had been weeping just now, but if she is unhappy she has never yet suffered me to see a tear. She is so fearful of causing me pain that she is almost too reserved in what interests or affects her. I hope she will conform herself without much effort to this new kind of life, on which in a few days we must now enter. While Mary is her friend, and so near at hand, I think every trouble will appear light, and your kindness to us I can never repay.

"Do not, pray, mention it," said Mrs. Wilmot, "you perhaps never heard from Harriette all she endured for the sake of my poor girl at school. But see, here is a house with a bill of 'Lodgings to let;' shall we inquire?"

Mrs. Browne looked in the direction in which her com-

panion pointed, where, in the meadow through which they were walking, and receding several yards from the pathway, stood a pretty and somewhat fanciful cottage, having a plot of garden ground before the door, fenced off with a light iron railing. The house was covered with clematis and roses, and lay in a sheltered nook richly wooded.

"It is indeed a sweet place," replied Mrs. Browne, "but with my poor finances it would be useless to inquire about such a lodging as this. It is far too pretty, and I should have to pay for such scenery, as well as for the rural decorations that it boasts."

"We can at any rate ask to see the rooms," and walking towards the house, Mrs. Wilmot opened the door. The tidy, old-fashioned housekeeper, already described in the person of Mrs. Bidwell, presented herself, and Mrs. Wilmot, without any particular recognition of her former attendant, entered, and said, "This lady wishes to see the lodgings." They were ushered into a pretty little sitting-room, on the right hand of the entrance. It was simply and well furnished, and everything appeared new. A French window facing the door opened on a piece of grass plot, with a good gravel walk round the parterres and fancy beds. It was in an excellent state of cultivation, and a profuse quantity of flowers were in full bloom.

Within this apartment was a second smaller room, suited for a study or morning-room. Mrs. Browne looked around her with a grave, meaning countenance, as if determined not to admire anything, occasionally saying, "Very nice, everything looks very neat, certainly," intimating at the same time to Mrs. Wilmot, by a shake of the head, that they need not trouble the woman any further, for that it must be in price far above what she could possibly afford, and that they had better retire.

"If the terms suited, should you like the place?" said Mrs. Wilmot, in an under tone.

"Oh yes, dear mamma," said Harriette, who, with Mary, had just entered, "I should be so happy here; what a sweet rustic spot! this pretty garden also for us to work in, and this nice little room; this may be my study, may it not?"

"I am afraid, my dear Harriette," replied her mother, "we must try to make ourselves happy in a much less comfortable and elegant looking cottage than this is."

"Then you think it looks comfortable and pretty?" said Mrs. Wilmot; "there are also two good bed-rooms."

"Oh, to be sure, you cannot doubt my admiring it; it is only infinitely too good for us; you cannot think me so fastidious as to object to it on any other account."

"This lady has engaged to take the cottage," said Mrs. Wilmot, turning to Bidwell.

"You are now my tenant, Mrs. Browne, and may take possession as soon as you find yourself tired with Duncombe as a residence; we shall still be near each other," and in a whisper she added, "we will talk about terms presently, they are very moderate, and I am delighted that my little device has succeeded in securing to myself so good a tenant and so agreeable a neighbour. This is Bidwell, my uncle's late housekeeper; I must introduce both her and her husband to your particular notice, as they are old and valued servants, having lived in our family for upwards of fifty years; they are now placed here to take care of the cottage and attend on any one who may occupy it."

Bidwell curtsied low, and "hoped they should be able to do all that the ladies required to make them comfortable."

The kindness which was thus intended was not lost on either Mrs. Browne or her daughter, yet nothing further passed before the servant, excepting an inquiring look of grateful affection, which glanced from Harriette's eyes as she turned towards Mrs. Wilmot.

It was then proposed that they should explore the vicinity of this rural retreat, and during the walk Mrs. Wilmot was employed in eloquently describing and logically proving the immense advantages which she should herself derive from Mrs. Browne's occupying the house rent free.

Among other arguments she stated, "that the old couple (who were to wait upon her and Harriette gratis) were now unfit for the bustle of so large a family as that at Duncombe, and William far too infirm to continue longer in the office of coachman; that she had no cottage to put them into excepting this, which was infinitely too good and much larger than they could use. That as they had been for so many years accustomed to active service and a household about them they would probably have felt very lonely, and perhaps broken their hearts, had they been suffered to live by themselves in idleness; and concluded with assuring Mrs. Browne that

by her consenting to inhabit the larger part of the house she was herself relieved of a great anxiety, as the old people would now have something to do and think of, which would prevent their either getting into mischief or low spirits."

Beyond the garden was a small paddock, which led into the burying ground belonging to the little village church of the hamlet of Woodburn. The tower was richly mantled with ivy, and the sun, now low on its decline, poured its bright gleam aslant the high lancet windows, which gave an appearance of the building having been illuminated on the inside. The churchyard was romantic but not extensive, and it was kept in the most exquisite order, and seemed to have been a spot on which much care as well as taste had been displayed. It was traversed with serpentine gravel walks, kept with the greatest neatness, young plantations were springing up every here and there, intermixed with many flowering shrubs. The graves were decorated with a few flowers, and those less humble were railed in and shaded with the willow, sweet jasmine, and rose. It seemed almost to aspire to being a humble imitation of Père la Chaise.

This attention to neatness would perhaps be valuable in its results on society in many ways, were it more generally adopted. The memories of those dear to us in life would be cherished, and the gentle thoughts which this attention to the spot where their loved remains are deposited, would have a soothing as well as a beneficial effect upon the mind and feelings.

Too much of dreariness and gloom are in our country usually thrown over everything connected with the departed, and the cold chilling aspect of an English churchyard, with its sombre heavy yew trees, its long, rank, weedy grass, give such an appearance of neglect and loneliness that we are tempted to turn from it at once rather than indulge the beneficial train of thought it would suggest. Why should this be? Why should every memorial of decay and mortality be placed here—grim heads and ghastly forms—as if nought but death, one hopeless death reigned around? Is it not better to make its aspect more cheering, that the mourner may resort to it as to a sacred place where those lie sleeping, with whom he once had held sweet converse, and with whom, after a few short months or years have run their course, he shall again be associated? And as we plant our

little offerings on the grave of one most dearly prized, and the flowers bud forth so fresh and gay, how emblematic and inspiring is the thought which they suggest of that eternal spring when all shall awake to the gladness of a new and perfect re-creation ! When all the imperfections and disease of our moral and physical nature (and those defects which in the most perfect characters around us, now blot and mar God's fairest work on earth) shall be removed, and one glorious summer's morn burst forth to shine for ever !

Such, or something like them, were the thoughts which were passing in the mind of the pastor's widow, as she traced a resemblance between the rural tranquillity of the spot on which they were standing, to the one where her loved husband had been laid but a few years before. After having paused a few moments, the ladies continued their walk towards a modern building in the gothic style which was at no great distance from the church, and which confessed itself, in large letters engraved on the pediment above the porch, to be "The Village School-house."

What spot could have been better selected for the residence of Mrs. Browne ? At the cottage she would be within five minutes' walk of the church, the school, and the poor cottages of the inhabitants of Woodburn. She would thus be restored to her former pursuits, and those which, from inclination as well as habit, were most congenial to her mind. The country was lovely, and her friends close at hand when she desired society ; and how could she be more agreeably employed, than in instructing the young in the ways of virtue, and in contributing, by her kindly attentions, towards the benefit and comfort of her indigent neighbours ? After an hour passed in rambling through the village, its shady lanes, and verdant meadows, during which time Mrs. Browne endeavoured to express all she felt for the kindness and generosity she had experienced, the happy party returned home.

During this walk, Harriette confided to her friend the plan she had projected of seeking to maintain herself by her own exertions. Mary appeared shocked that she should deem such a sacrifice necessary, for having herself experienced for a few years the pain of being placed among unfeeling persons in a subordinate situation, she would have used every argument in her power to dissuade her friend

from entering on such a life as that of a governess. Having exhausted her imagination with objections, she succeeded in prevailing on Harriette to consult Mrs. Wilmot on the subject.

The next morning Mrs. Wilmot called Harriette into her room. She told her that Mary had communicated what had passed between them on the previous evening. She commended Harriette highly on the self-sacrifice she was contemplating, yet urged on her strongly to give it up, or at any rate to defer for the present carrying it into execution. She pleaded her youth, her inexperience; she represented also that the state of society was such, that however laudable such an effort would be on her part, yet she could not take such a step without sinking in the estimation of her rich relations. That such a proposal was most creditable to her heart, but that most people look only at external circumstances. She suggested, that probably her affluent relations would rather supply her with the means to enable her to remain with her mother, than see her sent into the world to provide for herself; and she delicately hinted that it would afford her great pleasure if Harriette would remain with them, so as to wait and see whether something might not occur to prevent such a step being necessary.

Harriette appeared to lend an attentive ear to all Mrs. Wilmot's arguments; but the result of this consultation, as is too often the case when we intend to seek advice, was to confirm her more strongly in her first opinion as to the expediency of the plan she had proposed, and to determine her resolutely to carry it into execution.

She replied that she "could not be a burthen to her friends, nor ask charity of them, when she had the powers of mind, and excellent health to enable her to provide for herself." She knew a part, and fancied she knew all the trials to which such situations are sometimes liable, and she resolved to face them with good courage. She felt persuaded that such a line of conduct had now become her duty, and she fancied that this conviction would sustain her through its difficulties. But, alas! for how short a time does the energy and romance of any self-denying action support us, when the real evils attending on it press sensibly upon us? Harriette spoke of the gratification her little earnings might be to her dear mother in procuring her luxuries which were

now beyond her means ; and also of the comfort which her parent must derive from witnessing the readiness with which she intended to embrace her lot, and cheerfully yield to circumstances. For by anticipating the time when such an exertion must become necessary, her mother would be relieved from every shadow of anxiety as to what might be the fate of her child, when her decease should cause the trifling pittance now bestowed by her relations to be withdrawn.

Mrs. Wilmot felt the truth of what Harriette stated ; and the generous enthusiasm of disposition spoken by the eloquent eyes and lips of her young friend, when she spoke of her mother, and all she could encounter for her sake, was not without its effect ; and, with increased admiration at the energy of so young a girl, yet grieving that such a sacrifice should be deemed necessary, Mrs. Wilmot felt it impossible not to yield to Harriette's arguments, and even consented to mediate in her cause. Mrs. Browne was in the drawing-room, and thither Mrs. Wilmot and Harriette sought her. She listened attentively to all Harriette had to say, and as she watched her daughter's eager countenance, which grew pale or flushed as she became anxious or animated on the subject so greatly interesting to them both, tears stood in the widow's eyes, while a smile of love and admiration told how proud she was, and happy, at having so sweet a child to soothe her in her declining years. She was not likely to object, and pressing her to her heart, said—

“ My love, you are quite right. It is always best to bend willingly beneath the yoke ; it causes less pain, and less restraint. Your health is good, and your powers and acquirements may soon fit you for the task. I could never have proposed such an effort to you myself, yet I see that you are right. I will not speak to my Harriette of the degradation which worldly minds may attach to a situation of dependence, for those who do not love and esteem her higher for such conduct under present circumstances, are not worthy of a thought, and their opinion is valueless, whether good or bad. I will not object to your doing what is evidently so right and praiseworthy, although I shall greatly feel my loss when I miss you from my side. You are still very young ; I should therefore prefer your going first into a ladies' school, as you will then continue to

derive benefit and experience, and will not be so much exposed as you might be in a private family."

Harriette was pleased at her mother's ready acquiescence, and happy in the praises which were lavishly bestowed on her by both matrons. Inquiries were to be set on foot immediately in the neighbourhood, for a situation where a young lady was sought as an assistant in a school.

In the meanwhile, Harriette and her mother were busily occupied in removing into their new and rural abode. Cheerfulness was a duty on which Mrs. Browne ever laid a great stress; she had inculcated it strongly on her daughter's mind, and also set her an example of perfect acquiescence in the allotments of Providence. They had many subjects for gratitude and thankfulness in the various means of enjoyment which surrounded them, and they seemed determined to make the best of these; and while engaged in their little circle of daily duties, to all external appearance they were cheerful and happy. But poor Harriette! no one knew, and no one dreamt of the internal struggle that was going on beneath this seeming content! Yet the fear lest this step should lower her in the estimation of him whose opinion she most valued, was a thought which frequently and painfully recurred to her. She wished she had not seen him the last time; she determined to conquer her foolish heart, and took off the locket which she had always worn since it was first given her. When it was out of sight, she should perhaps more readily forget the giver. But long habit had so accustomed her to it, that its absence now had a contrary effect from what she had intended, and after a few days of banishment it was resumed.

Two months nearly had glided away since George had parted from her; and although she had but ill succeeded in tearing from her memory forbidden thoughts, yet she had succeeded better than she had hoped. Should they ever meet again, and should he appear to retain for her any vestige of former feeling, she felt now that she could perform the part she had laid down as a duty, and should treat him with such coldness and reserve, as should impress on him a belief that his hopes were futile, and his love unreturned. This she was resolved to put in practice, should his re-appearance ever render it necessary; yet she almost prayed that they might never meet again.

In the course of this time, and while Harriette was occupied with these thoughts, she heard that a lady residing in the neighbourhood of a small town about fifteen miles from Woodburn wished to engage a young person as an under teacher, who, if inclined to make herself generally useful, might in return derive some advantages from the instruction of masters in those accomplishments not included in the ordinary tuition. For this she was to receive a very small stipend, and be "boarded and washed inclusive."

This lady and her establishment were in great repute in the county for fashion and elegance, and the number of thirty boarders, to say nothing of fifteen day scholars from the neighbouring town and villages, spoke sufficiently for the confidence of parents in the powers as well as respectability of Miss Plattford and her seminary. This appeared to be so promising a situation for Harriette to commence her trial in, that in her name Mrs. Browne closed with the terms.

Within a few days of the time fixed on for Harriette's removal to Lawn Lodge, as the suburban residence of Miss Plattford was designated, she was taking an evening stroll with Mary and Frederick Wilmot, and some of the younger ones, in the grounds of Duncombe. They had not gone far when to the surprise of all present they perceived George Vincent hastening towards them from the lawn gate. He approached them with an eager pace, and a countenance radiant with smiles and happiness. Poor Harriette! where were now her bold resolves and boasted philosophy, and the indifference which she had flattered herself had lately been ossifying her heart? She was the first to see him, she turned pale, she trembled, and convulsively grasped the arm of Mary on which she was leaning. Mary turned to learn the meaning, and now George had nearly reached the spot where they were standing. Harriette had been used to greet him with the easy friendliness of a sister; how would he be prepared for other treatment? A few weeks before she would have stepped forward with a smile, the first to welcome him, but now while Mary and Frederick advanced she remained stationary, affecting to occupy herself with one of the children. George extended his hand. Harriette, pale as marble, and with her features rigid with

the effort to control her feelings, curtsied, and coldly offered her hand, and immediately turned aside again. What she had begun with so good an intention she determined to persevere in, yet she could not bear to contemplate the pain she was inflicting; she felt a coldness on her brow—it overspread her cheek and quivered on her lip, but she soon rallied, and resumed the part she had determined to act.

Women are more successful hypocrites than men, in pretending an indifference, but they can never equal the other sex in that more atrocious falsity which affects an interest where none is felt, and which can amuse itself “*en faisant les grimaces d’amour*.” A coquette even could scarcely have triumphed in the excruciating pain depicted on the countenance of George, but it lasted not a minute, for he soon fell into his usual tranquillity of expression and manner.

Harriette remained behind with one of the younger Misses Wilmot, leaving Mary and Frederick to entertain the unexpected visitor. She overheard them conversing freely, and she soon was rattling away with Lucy Wilmot far above her usual tone of liveliness. George looked round, but she continued her conversation without appearing to notice him; he fell back a step or two, encouraged by her manner, and he spoke to her, but the moment he did so she changed into the same formal, chilling tone which had before surprised him. He looked vexed and annoyed, and disappointed with this fruitless effort he again joined Mary in the van.

Harriette having never before tried her powers at deception, found it difficult to sustain—besides she feared that she might be acting absurdly, and she felt so unhappy that she longed to be alone; she determined therefore to quit the party, and return home. It was not above ten minutes’ walk, when she had reached the boundaries of the grounds of Duncombe, ere she would be at her mother’s door. She spoke to Mary, and told her her intention, as her mother would be expecting her, and having with less forced reserve taken leave of George and her other companions, and refused all solicitations to be allowed to accompany her, she hastened from them. After she was gone Frederick persisted in following her, at which George evinced some emotion (apparent by certain contortions of

face), coloured deeply, and then turned to converse with Mary, who had not observed his countenance.

"Where does Miss Browne reside at present?" said George; "with her mother, I suppose?"

"Yes, at a small cottage in the little village of Woodburn yonder. Mrs. Browne has taken the house for a twelvemonth, and will continue to reside there altogether I believe, for they appear much pleased with this neighbourhood."

While they were talking, Frederick returned out of breath, and joined them, to the no small satisfaction of George.

"Repulsed are you, Frederick?" said his sister. "I should have felt vexed with Harriette had she given you the preference before us. Should not you, Mr. Vincent? The fact is that my three elder brothers have all taken the liberty of falling in love with my friend, and presume to think of giving over their hearts to her care, and she will none of them. She is very judicious, I must say, for did she show the slightest preference for either of them there would be no peace left in the house."

"Preference, Mary! she may feel a preference though she will not show it; she carries her pretty head a little too high though, and I think you put her up to it, but I shall not fear. Vincent, will you enter the lists, and try your chance with this wilful lady?"

"No, indeed," replied George, trying to look indifferent, without exactly knowing how to do it. "I have no time for these pleasant frivolities, I am going to sea again so immediately, and it will be useless to go and leave my heart behind me. Besides, what chance have I with you in the field, Fred, and close on the spot," he added rather bitterly.

"As for personals, my dear friend," said Wilmot, "you beat me there, but I confess I think I have a better chance from meeting so frequently, and there's no knowing what perseverance may do. But without joking, do you not think Miss Browne very interesting?"

"Novelty has always a certain charm," replied George, hardly conscious of what he said; "I have known her for some years." It was of no use for George to attempt carrying on, or even taking a part in this conversation, so after uttering a few more meaningless sentences, and

finding he failed sadly, he gave up the attempt altogether. Harriette's behaviour towards him, the suspicion that Wilmot was his rival, or that in consequence of his friend's admiration, Harriette was coquetting and trifling with him, racked and tormented the young sailor most painfully.

He could not endure it longer, and at length he pretended accidentally to find in his pocket a letter which he was commissioned to give to Miss Browne, but which he had forgotten while she was present. He told this to Mary, and that as he intended to start for Plymouth early on the morrow, and Mrs. Browne was an old friend of his mother's, he must make a point of seeing her before he quitted the neighbourhood. He excused himself for not attending her to the house, saying that he should not stay long, and would rejoin them at the tea-table.

"Shall I go with you, Vincent?" said Frederick; "I am almost afraid to trust you alone with our pretty Harriette—but don't flirt much, and I shan't care."

This was declined, and George left them, to follow the path that Harriette had taken. What gall and wormwood was this raillery to him, as he passed with rapid strides towards Woodburn.

"This is the secret, is it?" he exclaimed; "but I must have it proved before I go." He had not reached the cottage to which he had been directed, as the residence of Mrs. Browne, when at a distance he caught a glimpse of a female figure entering the churchyard wicket at the back of the house; he thought it resembled Harriette, and therefore changed his route, and hastened in that direction.

Harriette had gone thither instead of directly home, from feeling that she required a little time for reflection, and to recover the flutter and agitation of her spirits, occasioned by the unexpected arrival of George. She seated herself on a grassy bank near the church, and resting her head on her hand, was soon wrapt in profound thought. She reflected "whether she had really done right, whether such a sacrifice was really a necessary duty. The pain it cost was not to herself alone. Was this return for a generous attachment justifiable under any circumstances? Can there not be a friendship? must it all be crushed? In the case of a female friend could she be unkind and cold to one who loved, and sought her love?"

How hard the task! yet for his future good it must be done."

Such was her fallacious reasoning. "Could she consent to encourage the attentions of one whose family would think a connection with herself a degradation? Could she wish him to do anything for which he might be blamed, and be herself the means of disuniting a parent and her child?"

The wicket creaked upon its hinges; she started, turned her head in the direction from whence the sound proceeded, and seeing George arose from her seat.

George advanced towards her. "I beg your pardon, Miss Browne, for intruding on you here."

"Not at all," replied Harriette, hardly knowing what she said; "it is a public pathway."

"I have brought a letter from my sister Cecile, which I omitted to give you just now."

"Thank you." She took the letter, and a most embarrassing silence ensued. George at length broke it—he spoke calmly, yet much under his usual tone; his voice was deep, and that alone showed the effort it cost him to be calm.

"May I presume, on the grounds of an early friendship"—his lip slightly quivered—"to ask Miss Browne if I have offended her?"

Harriette felt agitated, yet she cleared her voice, and said firmly, "Not at all, Mr. Vincent. Did you leave your mother and sister well?" Harriette sedulously engaged herself in making holes in the turf with the ferrule of her parasol, while George replied—

"Yes!—No!—I forget how I left them. Harriette," he resumed with great earnestness of manner, "I am plain and straightforward in all I do. I understand none of the fine speeches, the shuffling and nonsense of a modern dangler. I have loved you with little less than devotion ever since we first became acquainted, and years and absence have not impaired the feeling; they have added only to the strength of my attachment. You have ever until within this hour appeared to value me. I do not know how to talk of the 'conceit which has taught me to aspire so high,' nor of the 'presumption of having thought that you returned my affection;' I leave such cant to those who have no intention but to deceive. We have been like brother and

sister in our love. I have, God knows, little of personal vanity, yet if I thought of one deserving of esteem, and one whom it would be the dearest wish of my heart to call my own, I should carefully avoid all expressions which should serve to convey to her mind that I was willing to become her slave. Those who cringe and fawn, too frequently repay with unkindness any previous servility. Mutual respect and esteem must be the foundation of a lasting happiness; and I should show but little respect for your understanding and good sense, and none for myself, did I indulge in the flattery and nonsense which I know is often uttered on such occasions. You cannot be ignorant how greatly I prize you; and I call heaven to witness, that there is no object in life which I so earnestly desire, as a return of love from you; and that, disappointed of this hope, I may, in accordance with my natural disposition—of which fickleness forms no part—I may be miserable for life. Until within this hour, you have always been simple and friendly in all you did and said, and have never appeared otherwise than to value and return my love. I see you now totally changed. Will you, on the plea of a long friendship, oblige me by accounting for this change? and pray remember that my happiness is at stake in your reply.”

“No, I can give no explanation. I am willing to continue my friendship towards you. You have not offended me, but more than friendship you must not expect.”

“May I then hope, that at some future time you will allow me to speak to you on this subject?”

“No; we can never be more to each other than we are at present.” This was said in so gentle, yet determined a voice, that George, convinced of a truth which he had never dared to realize before, seemed overcome. He threw himself at her feet, and seized her hand.

“Harriette! Harriette! do not trifle with me—you know not the agony you inflict. I leave England to-morrow for years—perhaps never to return, unless I have some hope—afford me all the satisfaction you can—you are my friend—it is but charity. Oh! do not hate me for this vehemence, but—do you—do you love another? Is Wilmot my rival? Tell me, dearest, only tell me this, and do not despise me!”

Harriette's courage and power were fast ebbing. She

endeavoured to release her hand. "Mr. Vincent," she exclaimed, "is this manly? Is such conduct either manly or considerate? I pray you be calm. Caprice and coquetry are strangers to me also. I have no preference for any other, and he you mention can *never* interest me, otherwise than as the brother of my best friend. You have my friendship, yet be assured that we can never be more to each other than at present. Allow me to retire."

"Then God for ever bless you! though I may hope no more. Yet, Harriette, should you ever need a friend, or one faithful heart, to shelter you from the coldness and indifference of the world, here—here shall you find it." He pressed the little hand he held to his breast, raised it to his lips, hung over it for a moment, and starting on his feet, was in a few seconds out of sight.

* No tears came to poor Harriette's relief; there seemed to be a cessation of all feeling—a weight pressed on her—a breathless, withering sensation, like the heavy stillness previous to a thunder-storm. She stood motionless on the spot where George had quitted her, for some time utterly unconscious of where she was. At length she appeared to awake as from a trance, her temples throbbed violently, and yet no tear fell. She soon recollected that her mother would probably be anxiously awaiting her return, and with hasty steps she quitted the churchyard, and quickly reached her home.

During that evening and the following day, Harriette moved about the house like an automaton—she was unable to think; but from this state she was soon roused by the preparations necessary to be made for her removal to Miss Plattford's establishment, which in a degree diverted her thoughts from the current they would otherwise have taken.

Mary was frequently with her friend during the last few painful days to be passed at home, yet no observations relative to George were made, further than that Mary said that they were all greatly surprised at the suddenness and shortness of his visit at Duncembe. That they could not guess what should have led him to come uninvited for only one night. That he seemed greatly out of spirits, and that Frederick supposed that something unpleasant must have occurred at home, from his remaining with his mother only a few weeks, and choosing, contrary to his first intention, to

go out again in the same ship in which he had returned. He had given no explanation as regarded his change of plans, nor of the cause of his unexpected appearance among them. And as Harriette had no intention of enlightening her friend on this subject, she remained as much perplexed in the solution of the mystery as before, and nothing more passed between them on the subject.

The fact of his quitting England so shortly after his arrival, arose from the evident symptoms of an increasing affection, which Mrs. Vincent discovered in her son's feelings towards Harriette Browne. This was one chief object in sending him to sea again as soon as possible, and another reason was, that Admiral Lord R——, who was an old friend of her late husband, was to have the command of the vessel in which George had returned; and feeling the advantage this connexion might prove to her son's future prospects, she readily availed herself of the little influence she possessed with his lordship, to get George re-appointed to the same ship.

CHAPTER XIX.

Miss Plattford's seminary was reputed to be far superior to any school of its kind in the neighbourhood. The house was situated at about the distance of three quarters of a mile from a provincial town, and on a public road, from which it was removed a sufficient distance to establish its claims to gentility. The lawn sloped gradually to the road side, and was carefully screened from the curious eyes of passengers by a high and thick plantation.

The old yellow chariot before mentioned as the property of the late Mr. Leighton, and which had been lent by Mrs. Wilmot on this important occasion, drove through the five-barred green gate, and proceeding about forty yards over a smooth gravel walk, reached the front entrance of Miss Plattford's house, poetically denominated Lawn Lodge. Harriette and her mother were immediately ushered into a good sized room, which the lady of the house was pleased to call her "studio;" and while awaiting the appearance of Miss Plattford, Harriette had full time to observe the most striking features in the objects around her, and draw from thence all she could respecting the character and habits of the individual whose will would now be her law for many months to come. There was a great appearance of attention to elegance in the furnishing of the apartment, yet it was littered with a heterogeneous assortment of things, as if the lady was above attending to ordinary trifles; and even this want of neatness had a studied look, as if intended to produce effect. On the table lay some withered wild flowers, and a water-coloured sketch of the bouquet, half finished, a glass beside it of dirty water, and a piece of soiled rag, on which the brushes *ought* to have been wiped, but in lieu of being so, they lay together, covered with paint. A cast of

a human head, in plaster of Paris, phrenologically illustrative of the position of the different organs, a pair of compasses, a work on the science of Craniology, and a book, in manuscript, apparently containing notes and observations, stood on the same table. The drawer of a cabinet was partially drawn out, so as to present a half-assorted and imperfectly-arranged collection of shells with a conspicuous label—

“MULTIVALVE.—Chiton, Doris, 28, unattached; Pholas, Ascidia, unattached; Lepas, Triton, 32, parasitical.”

Fragments of red sand-stone, lavas, gneiss, mica-slate, and some antediluvian shells, most of which were as large as a moderate-sized pumpkin, lay on another small table, which, delicate to an extreme in structure, might literally be said to groan beneath the weight. A guitar with a broken string, and a bright blue ribbon attached to it, was laid upon the sofa. The question which not unnaturally suggested itself to Harriette's mind, on seeing the materials and subjects of so many and such various pursuits, was, “Can this lady attend to all these things during one morning?”

The window afforded a view of a very pretty and beautifully-kept flower garden; and in a shrubbery beyond might be seen the fair students, walking to and fro, arm in arm, each supposed to be conning her daily task. Miss Plattford, like Aristotle, was very partial to this exercise. She was a peripatetic philosopher, and kept her pupils almost incessantly walking, although her motives probably were very different from those of the sage. She considered it as desirable for the improvement of the figure; and besides this, she had an eye for the picturesque, and it was a pretty sight from her windows to see her tender “charges enjoying themselves in their straw hats and pink gingham, as they flitted backwards and forwards among the green foliage.”

Harriette was interrupted in her contemplation of this pleasing scene, by the entrance of Miss Plattford. She was rather stout, and about the middle height, and perhaps a little under forty years of age. She wore no cap, but adopted that most atrocious style of *coiffure*, for any lady a little *passée*, that of sporting her own hair in a crop of close curls. Her face was florid, and pitted with the small-pox, yet her features were regular, and the expression quick and animated, bespeaking great good-nature. She was

dressed in a dark silk, which being the mode in Miss Browne's school days, was made sufficiently short to show, or rather thrust into notice, that member whose merits or demerits is by many considered a subject of great importance, and which is usually denominated "my boot." Now, Miss Plattford had a very good foot, which occupied a great share of her thoughts, and as it was a subject of continual satisfaction to herself, so also it had a very great influence on her general air and carriage. This little foot caused her to wear her dress of an uniform length, whatever might be the fashion at the time, and this length was fixed at the degree of elevation of the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-two. It also led her to float, skim, and trip on her toes, a little more than was necessary, or consistent with elegance; while one foot was elevated and thrown out in the position best calculated to exhibit the perfect symmetry of its form.

She curtsied on her entry; but her curtsey, which was very perfect in the forward motion, had unfortunately a suddenness or hitch in the recovery of her upright posture, very much as if the left foot had been thrown out behind, to make way for the bend. After this first greeting, Miss Plattford advanced, and shook Harriette cordially by the hand, saying that she "hoped they should do very well together."

Refreshment was ordered for Mrs. Browne; and after some conversation, which all seemed to hinge on the importance of Miss Plattford, and the superiority of her establishment and method, over every other in the kingdom, Mrs. Browne took her leave, well satisfied with the kindness of manner evinced towards Harriette by their new acquaintance, and feeling that her child would not be rendered uncomfortable by haughtiness or neglect. Miss Plattford, pleading the excuse of being very much occupied, told Harriette that she would introduce her to her head teacher. She explained that her own habits were so active, that she found the assistance of two ladies quite sufficient, and spoke in praise of the one she now had,—“hoped that they would like each other,” and added, that “when she was more at liberty, she would tell Harriette what was required of her, and initiate her into the mystery of her *own* mode of instruction. As the garden was enclosed within very high

walls, having no outlet on the side where the pupils were allowed to walk, the attendance of a guard was unnecessary, and the teachers were thus enabled to employ the hours of relaxation as they felt disposed. Miss Plattford therefore conducted Harriette to a back sitting-room called the school parlour. On entering, the lady who was seated there alone at work, arose, and turning towards the door as it opened, discovered to Harriette's astonished view her former friend Miss Percivale.

Miss Browne! Miss Percivale! they exclaimed simultaneously, and Harriette having advanced in a friendly manner, they both shook hands. Miss Plattford only remained to learn how they had become previously acquainted, and being pleased to hear that Harriette was educated at Forester House, and had been a pupil of Miss Percivale's, she retired, leaving them both to make the best they could of such a meeting.

It must be remembered that Miss Percivale had never heard anything of Harriette since the morning of the day when her noncompliance with her wishes had so greatly angered her, on which day also Miss Percivale had absconded from Forester House. How much, of the circumstances which led her to quit the establishment, was known to her pupils Miss Percivale had no idea; but she very naturally suspected that the whole of the proceedings respecting herself, Miss Boulton, and Mr. Sutton would have been made known and canvassed in the school-room. It was, therefore, with feelings replete with bitterness and mortification that she now recognized in the new sub-teacher the person she would least have wished to see.

Miss Percivale had been greatly softened in disposition by her distresses, yet still a little of the old Miss Percivale remained in her breast, and was now called again into action by the sight of her former "self-willed" pupil. It must also be recollected that Miss Percivale had no idea of the connection which existed between the kind attendant and supplier of her comforts during her illness, and the hated girl who now stood in all her native gentleness before her. She was therefore as full of asperity in her feelings towards Miss Browne as formerly, excepting that her dislike might have been greater from Harriette's supposed knowledge of the very humiliating transaction with Mr. A. Sutton.

Harriette, on the contrary, thinking only of how much poor Miss Percivale had suffered since that time, had in her sympathy and kindly feelings forgotten, or very nearly so, all the annoyances she had experienced from her while at school.

On Miss Plattford's leaving the room the elder lady commenced speaking.

"So Miss Browne you are come to be one of us at last! I am surprised to see you here, though I thought how it would be, when you chose to keep company always with the half-boarders and such like! I thought you must be educating for a teacher, that I did; and yet, if I remember right, you had pride enough of one sort at least. I always said a real lady would hold her head a little higher than you did though! Well, I'm sorry, nevertheless, that you should come to such a life as this; for I could pity a dog that was turned into a ladies' seminary as teacher. I suppose you all talked over my leaving Mrs. Durett's in a fine way, and made your remarks on my conduct? But I can tell you, whatever you heard, it was quite false, perfectly false, for no one knows a word of the real truth yet, and never shall till they can get me talk about it, and that won't be soon, I can promise them. I suppose there was a great deal of impertinence in the way you were all taught and allowed to speak of me, hey?"

"No, indeed, dear Miss Percivale, there was not," replied Harriette, in a mild tone. "No one ever knew why or how you left us, and I never heard an unkind word spoken of you. You were a great favourite with all your elder pupils, and Miss Crossman was constantly speaking in your praise. And if I ever behaved in an unbecoming manner towards you I am really sorry for it. Pray let us be friends, ma'am, and forget what is past."

"Oh, I have no objection, I am sure," replied Miss Percivale; "I wish to heaven that I had a real friend, but it is too late now to think of that. I suppose I have not gone the way to make friends, and nobody now will seek me. Oh, I wish I could see one dear, kind creature whom I never can forget as long as I live. She soothed me and made me quite another person for the time. Yet I am not now the Miss Percivale you used to know; my spirits are all gone, and I have no wish to be otherwise than on terms

with you, only do not, I beg of you, my dear, say anything here of what is past ; though I think you said you knew nothing about it. I am sorry for you from my heart. How was it you happened to come here?"

The reply to this interrogatory was interrupted by the entry of the thirty young ladies, who, at the sound of a bell, had been summoned to resume their studies. Harriette perceived no difference in them from those she had been accustomed to, excepting that, as great and small flocked into the room, they hustled and jostled each other with less of propriety than was the fashion at Forester House ; and when they perceived the presence of a stranger their gaze was more intense and more prolonged than was either agreeable to Harriette or consistent with politeness.

To avoid the awkwardness which Harriette felt in her new situation, she asked Miss Percivale whether she could give her a class, that she might have something to do ; and, accordingly, twelve little girls were quickly selected to read English. Harriette, although the little girls were very small, blushed deeply each time she had to correct them, which the little girls perceiving, they made a few more mistakes than were necessary, and looked so much at each other, and so much at their new instructress, that poor Harriette's cheeks presented a painful succession of blushes, when the little girls, emboldened by her evident confusion, smiled mischievously at each other, and became more inattentive and more careless. Harriette was heartily glad when this task was over. She felt that she had been very silly to care for anything such small children did, and yet at the time she could not help it. She determined the next time to put on a bold face, and show her pupils that she would not be trifled with.

From Miss Percivale, after the studies were concluded, Harriette learned that Miss Plattford was a very kind-hearted, liberal woman, but "rather odd." That everybody liked her, but that she was not a good school mistress in the general acceptance of the word. Or, as Miss Percivale expressed it, for she was not inclined to favour the profession,

"Miss Plattford is not sufficiently resolute, determined, strict, severe, unchangeable, obstinate, mean, and close with her pupils, neither attentive to economy, nor unbending to parents, and suspicious of everybody ! These are the ele-

ments necessary to forming a good and prosperous mistress of a boarding-school, and in all these poor Miss Plattford is utterly deficient. It requires the nerves of a Hercules and the eyes of a lynx or an Argus, and the haughtiness and inflexibility of an Achilles to cope with the tempers of the children—to bear with the exacting spirit, the whims and fancies of parents—to keep the teachers from clandestine love affairs, and the servants from robbing your pantry! I anticipate a speedy downfall of our establishment shortly, for poor Miss Plattford is deficient in all these qualifications.

“The last teacher, whose place you now fill, was sent off at a minute’s notice for being detected in the habit of sending notes by one of the day pupils to her father’s clerk and making appointments, unknown to any one but themselves, to meet him and take a walk. On one occasion she made the same young lady write a sham invitation for her and two of the elder pupils to pass the evening at her mother’s house. Miss Plattford gave leave and a servant came to fetch them. But since she is gone we hear that it is known all over the town, that this young teacher and two of her pupils, with the clerk and two smart friends of his, walked off into the country to a tea house, where the clerk liberally treated them all to an entertainment. The two other young men were supposed to be devoted admirers of Miss Maxwell and Miss Cox, who accompanied the teacher in this expedition; but as on the examination the two last-mentioned young ladies looked very penitent and very innocent of any other thought than the enjoyment of the syllabus and junket, they were permitted to remain with us still, to the great satisfaction of their parents. The teacher and the day pupil were both expelled.

“The mammas too are so troublesome; one whose daughter is as well as and stronger than I am, requires that she should have a cup of chamomile tea every morning, and a sandwich and glass of wine punctually at eleven o’clock; and one called the other morning, because she saw her ‘Laura in the wrong frock at church, the one she only wished her to wear for company,’ and said that she ‘really thought Miss Plattford might remember, and comply with such a trifling request;’ and this is the way she is constantly annoyed. Mrs. Durett would have said, ‘Really,

ma'am, it is not my habit to be troubled with such matters, nor can I suffer myself to be put to inconvenience on such mere frivolities ; if you are not satisfied with the progress that your daughter makes under my care, and with the arrangements I may deem necessary, I beg you to remove her without loss of time." Then the mamma looks ashamed of herself, the daughter remains, and no more is thought about the frock. But Miss Plattford, on the contrary, says, 'I am sorry I should not have clearly understood you, ma'am, I will speak of it immediately,' and therefore she is subjected to continual vexations and impertinences ; for it is a difficult thing to remember and attend to even one whim a piece for each mamma of the thirty young ladies, yet she is so obliging, and has so much good-natured forbearance, that she is sure to be persecuted and imposed upon."

Miss Percivale also informed Harriette of the duties that were now required of her. She had nothing of the nursery maid office to perform, which is too often blended with that of a sub-teacher. She was to work with the head teacher, in assisting and seeing that the pupils kept their presses and wardrobes neat ; and what the young ladies were unable to do in the way of repairing their own clothes, Miss Percivale and Harriette were to do between them. But Miss Plattford's pupils were not to be fine ladies ; she thought it desirable that they should be useful and industrious as well as accomplished members of society. They were none of them of such a grade as to expect the attendance of a separate maid, when they quitted school, and she thought it a pity to accustom them to habits which it would cost them some trouble to shake off.

What being is so utterly helpless as a fashionable young lady just quitting school ? It is with difficulty that she can perform for herself the offices of the toilet, and however proud her mamma may be of her graceful deportment, and various accomplishments, she has reason every day to deplore the inability and disinclination which her daughter evinces to everything like the useful employment of her needle. The hooks may be off her dress, and pins used as a substitute, her gloves are unsewed, or she may be late in joining her companions in a walk from being unable to find them ; and the maid is not sufficiently disengaged to

help her in repairing the damage, or seeking in her littered drawers for another pair.

These things seem too trivial to write of, but they are by no means too insignificant to cause a good deal of inconvenience, nor are they of rare occurrence among those poor girls, who are educated only to shine in company, and whose fortunes will not allow them to play the fine lady consistently.

All that Harriette heard, and all that she observed, tended to convince her that she would be far more comfortable in her new situation than she had at all anticipated. She would have a great deal to occupy her, and evidently Miss Plattford took great pains to make the teachers comfortable, and to give them consequence in the eyes of the pupils; therefore, although Harriette was only an under teacher, and very young, she had nothing to fear in the way of insolence from any of the young ladies, or the servants. The kind feeling which reigned in Miss Plattford's breast seemed to extend itself to every member of her establishment, and was in a degree more or less reflected in them. Yet school girls will be school girls, and servants will be servants, for under the most auspicious governments they seem inseparable from their distinctive foibles. In the course of the following morning Miss Plattford sent for Harriette to attend her, as she was then at liberty to explain to her, her methods of instruction, and what were the duties which were now required of her.

After a few little compliments and ordinary observations had been made, Miss Plattford said with her usual complacency—

“My dear Miss Browne, you appear very young to have engaged in so difficult a task as that of education, pray what is your age? In your eighteenth year, ah! I thought so. This is certainly very young to begin the duties of tuition. You are therefore, I think, very fortunate in having come to me, for there are, I will say, great advantages in my mode of instruction and management of the children. Mine is no ordinary establishment. I was born, I believe, with an instinctive horror of boarding schools for girls, yet when grown up I determined on adopting a system of my own for ameliorating this mode of education, and avoiding such errors as I think most objectionable, and

I hope I do not falsely flatter myself, when I say that in a degree I have succeeded.

"It too generally happens that there is no more external difference between the several members of a seminary, than in a flock of sheep. Their distinctive characters are lost or hidden, and they are turned out into the world all precisely alike. They are all 'prettily behaved,' and their minds incessantly occupied in thinking of what will be thought of them. Whether merry or sad, clever or stupid, ignorant or well informed, amiable or perverse, stout or thin, they have all the same demure, mincing, restrained, and odious manner. All they can say is, 'Yes, sir,' and 'No, ma'am,' and if they are drawn into uttering any other monosyllable they look frightened, and as if they had done something of which they ought to be ashamed. This is not shyness. I like real shyness, in a young girl particularly, although it is so entirely out of fashion. It shows a sensitive delicacy of feeling, and with a little encouragement this will wear off quite soon enough; but the affected coyness of a girl fresh from a boarding school is nothing but downright obstinate folly.

"To prevent this, I never teach manner, I never speak on the subject, nor mention it before them. The merry child laughs and runs when she likes, and the sad one sighs and looks dismal, until she is inspired by the cheerfulness of her companions. I allow them to do just what they please, and have never uttered those abominable epithets which are sufficient to paralyze all the generous impulses of nature, "genteel" and "lady-like;" yet were they to act otherwise than is consistent with their characters as ladies, they would receive an immediate reprimand from me.

"When I pass through the school-room, or the garden where they are amusing themselves, they do not instantly assume any unnatural gravity of deportment. They may suspend their play for a time out of respect towards me, or to hasten forwards for a little notice or a caress, but never from fear. I have even joined them in their games, and thus won their love without forfeiting their respect. I never keep them at their studies beyond two hours at a time, and in the fine weather they are in the garden as much as four or five times during the day. For a young lady to be seen to run is thought atrocious, and to see a

little girl run who has not been accustomed to the exercise, and who has been taught to think it unbecoming, is a most ludicrous sight. With the freedom, however, which I encourage, and which is of course natural to children, it is an enjoyable sight to me to see them at their games. I have gone so far as to encourage them in running races, and at the end of the winter season have given prizes to the swiftest of foot.

"So far I have succeeded admirably in regard to their figures, their easy carriage, and graceful movements, as well as in their health. You will not see one phlegmatically fat, nor one fragile, consumptive-looking girl among those who have been under my care for any length of time.

"I feel that I shall weary you, Miss Browne, but I wish of course that you should know a little of my ways, so that we may all act in concert for the general weal of my pupils.

"With the assistance of phrenology also, of which study I am particularly fond, I obtain a further insight into the characters of those under my charge than I could possibly do by mere observation. When the developments are good or bad, they are encouraged or thwarted accordingly. It has been very useful to me, and I have now adopted the plan of matching a girl who is deficient in some desirable moral organ with one in whom it is strongly displayed. They walk together, occupy the same room, learn the same tasks, and, in fact, are friends. I have now two very interesting heads which occupy my attention, belonging to my two eldest pupils. Miss Maxwell has an extremely well-balanced cranium, a really good phrenological head. She possesses a warm heart and a vivid imagination, and if I have a favourite it is this young girl. Miss Cox on the contrary has no great intellectual power; she is cautious, cunning, and narrow-minded, and very fond of eating. Her caution will have a restraining effect, and so act well on the thoughtlessness which must attend the imaginative powers, warm feelings, and quick impulses which I have described in Selina Maxwell, while the generosity of Selina's character will produce an equally happy change on the illiberal disposition of Miss Cox. Already I think I can perceive a difference in the character of the two girls.

"There is another project which engages my attention just now, and which I am anxious to try. You will see,

Miss Browne, that I am full of schemes, but a person of talent cannot be tied down and restricted within the prescribed limits of ordinary routine. I want if possible to reduce conversation to a system which may be taught, so as to remedy the utter inability which every young lady displays on first quitting school of holding any rational intercourse in society.

"If at a small evening party you should see a young lady dressed in book-muslin, erect as possible, and assuming a most imperturbable cast of countenance, her chair placed a little behind all the rest of the company, not having been seen to speak or move for above an hour, you immediately suspect that she is just emancipated from the school-room; and should you at length see a gentleman approach her, and ask if she has 'been walking this morning,' and she replies, 'No, sir,' and then the thin lips collapse again tighter than before, and discouraged by the laconic reply, and the evident sign that nothing more communicative may be expected from her, the youth moves off to another part of the room, and you are then perfectly satisfied that your surmise was just.

"Now it has struck me lately that I once heard a very sensible friend of mine remarking one day on this phenomenon, who suggested that it might be possible to reduce the art of conversing rationally and agreeably to a system, which might be taught at school, by forming it into a kind of grammar of small talk. When I have arranged my thoughts on the subject, I shall give a lecture in the school-room, and hope then fully to explain and illustrate my meaning. I think, Miss Browne, that with your assistance, for you appear perfectly to understand and enter into my views, and with that of Miss Percivale, we shall be able to improve and enlarge on this suggestion of my friend's, so that it may be productive of great benefit to my pupils after they quit my care, as well as to society at large."

The bell sounded for dinner, and Harriette hastened to the school-room, very much pleased with the kindness and confidence of Miss Plattford's manner, and thinking her very amusing and clever, but certainly, as Miss Percivale had hinted, "rather odd."

Several weeks elapsed with the usual evenness and want of incident common to school life. Harriette had fallen

well into the work of tuition, and each day it became less irksome to her. The little girls had of late failed in their efforts to make the new teacher "colour," and were altogether reduced to a proper state of subordination. Miss Percivale and Harriette were on very good terms, but had made no great advances towards a confidential friendship, yet many little civilities and attentions passed constantly between them.

One evening, however, Miss Plattford gave a tea party, having invited a few of her particular friends, among whom were three gentlemen, which was a pretty fair proportion, seeing that there were only nineteen ladies present. The pupils were to be sent to bed half an hour earlier than usual, that Miss Percivale and Harriette might be at liberty to join the company after tea, and give them a little good music. Miss Cox became suspicious from the certain unmistakeable aroma of jellies, pigeon pies, and other good things which exhaled from the kitchen, that something unusual must be going forward in the house. It was Miss Plattford's intention that none of the young ladies should know of this party, because they might wish to be present, and also they might be tempted to play some tricks, did they know that her attention and that of her auxiliaries would be engaged with her company during the evening.

Miss Cox was of a particularly inquisitive turn, and especially so when her curiosity was awakened through the medium of her olfactories, as on the present occasion, she therefore determined to find out what great event was approaching which had called forth the odours from such savory viands. By coaxing and bribing one of the servants, she learned that the preparations were for a tea and supper party; she imparted this knowledge to Miss Maxwell immediately, and they determined on watching, for the purpose of finding out who was coming, and what advantage they could reap from this unwonted gaiety.

Half-past seven arrived, and so did the company, but the young ladies by this time were ordered to their bedrooms at the back of the house, and Miss Cox was thus debarred from making any investigations. The room occupied by Miss Cox and her friend contained beds for two other pupils, and Harriette Browne, who was to act as a duenna.

When the bell struck eight, Harriette, who had been

sitting reading in the same room, fancying that the four young ladies were now fast asleep, gently crept out as she had been desired to do, and descended to Miss Plattford's apartment, where she and Miss Percivale were to arrange their toilets, so as effectually to conceal from the children that anything unusual was going forward, or that they would be unwatched for an hour or two.

Miss Cox had high designs, she proposed to Miss Maxwell and her two other companions that they should avail themselves of some golden moments, to make a descent upon the pantry, and carry off such eatables as should come first to hand. They therefore agreed to sham sleep, so that the teachers might go as early as possible into the drawing-room.

After Miss Browne had quitted their chamber, Miss Cox raised herself in the bed, and peeping her head out between the white dimity curtains, said in a whisper—

"Selina, dear, it will be quite dark in a quarter of an hour; how shall we manage? will you go, or shall I?"

"Not I. I shall be afraid. I do not think we ought to do it."

"Nonsense, you will not be so cowardly as to give it up. I know that you are afraid of the dark. Don't be stupid now. It will be such fun, dear."

"I am not afraid of the dark. I do not mind going, but we had better both go."

"La! Selina, what can be the use of that, we should only be more likely to be seen—you had better go alone."

"No, I'll not go alone, Sarah, because it is your plan, and you ought to take a share."

After the quarter of an hour had elapsed, Sarah Cox got up and put on her dressing gown. "Now, Selina, get ready, and I will go and listen what is doing, and whether all is safe."

She opened the door very gently; a long dark passage led from their apartment to the head of the back staircase, and near the bottom of the stairs, stood the pantry or store room about midway between the drawing-room and the kitchens. Miss Cox listened at the top of the stairs, and plainly hearing that the servants were together in their premises, with the doors shut, she descended a step or two—no light was to be seen, but the faintest gleam

from the window; she heard Miss Percivale and Harriette performing a duet, which they had recently been practising together on the pianoforte. All was safe, and the coast clear; it was no use to wait for Selina, there might be no time to lose. She flitted down the stairs, gained the pantry, and by the lamp which was reflected from the front door in at the window, she could clearly distinguish the trays laid out for supper, and those which had been just brought out from tea. She cast a wistful glance at the former—they could not be touched with safety, she therefore directed her attention to the remnants of the past meal; she devoured on the spot such cream, coffee, and sugar-candy as she could avail herself of, and having emptied the cake and bread and butter plates into her lap, she ran up stairs again, charmed with her success, and having given a ration to each of her friends—reserving by far the largest portion to her own use—she jumped into bed again to enjoy the fruit of her exertions.

"Sarah," said Selina, in a low tone, "I hardly like to eat mine; it is very wrong, for you know Miss Plattford is always so kind."

"Very well, give it back again to me if you don't want it, you silly creature. But I see what you mean, you expect to escape if you don't eat any, and perhaps may tell of us."

"I am not so base as that, Sarah, I will eat some if you think that," and Selina immediately commenced an attack upon her share, without expressing any further scruples of conscience. After this the young ladies, thinking nothing more was to be done that night, fell fast asleep, with the exception of Sarah Cox. She had weightier thoughts to occupy her mind. The pigeon pie, the jellies and creams, arose before her vivid imagination and precluded the possibility of sleep. She had left the door of the room open, that she might hear when the supper went in and when it came out again; and at eleven o'clock she called to her companions.

"Selina! Margaret! Maria! Here, wake, will you, the supper is all come out; which of us shall go now? You will not be so cowardly as to let me go again by myself, I suppose?"

"Oh, Sarah," said Selina, "I wish you would not disturb

me; I am so sleepy, I do not care about the nonsensical things."

The eloquence of Miss Cox, and the suspicions which she expressed of the cowardice and meanness of her companions had the effect of prevailing on Selina and Margaret to go with her. They gained the pantry in safety. In this case they were obliged to make the best of their time, and laid hold of and eat anything that first came in their way; for creams and jellies could not be turned out of the glasses, nor could they take the glasses up-stairs.

Full justice had been done to Miss Plattford's refreshments in the drawing-room, and having reserved a little for Maria, who would not accompany them, the trays were now completely emptied. The remnants of the pigeon pie Miss Cox demolished alone, without mentioning its presence to her companions. Most sedulously had they applied themselves to the work in hand, when Miss Cox, finding nothing more in the trays to engage her attention, began to feel round the shelves for something nice. Her hand had not groped far, when it encountered a smooth jar, such as is used for preserves; she took off the cover, and applying a spoon first to the contents of the vessel and then to her mouth, exclaimed in an agony—

"La! I have eaten something so odd and so nasty; I cannot think what it is," and she commenced coughing and sputtering. "Oh! I hope to goodness it is nothing very nasty. Do you remember, Selina, when I filled my mouth with uncooked giblets, as I came in the dark to feel for something nice? That was a tit-bit—oh, gah! But I can't think what this is; I hope it will not make me ill. It tastes, I think, of turpentine, perhaps it is some horrid furniture paste. Dear Selina, give me a tart if you can find one, to put out the horrid taste."

At this moment they heard a movement in the kitchen. Off flew Miss Cox and Margaret, but before Selina could get by the servant came up the passage. Had it been one of the maid servants of the house she would have pushed by her, but it was the hired waiter, and she could not let him see her in her night-dress, and without shoes or stockings. She slipped back again, behind the door. The man just advanced his light a little to look in. Poor Selina's teeth chattered with alarm. But it was hardly the fraction of a

minute ere he closed the door, and double-locked it on the outside.

Her companions were anxiously awaiting the return of Selina, and Margaret was on the point of descending again to see what had become of her, when the bustle was heard to increase down stairs, and the party were evidently dispersing. Before this noise had subsided Harriette came into the room for the night; the girls were obliged again to sham sleep, although their alarm for their schoolfellow prevented their doing so really until a late hour in the morning. Poor Selina stood trembling in every limb from cold and fear. She listened with a palpitating heart to the last sounds of the departing guests. How dreary was the thought of passing the night in such loneliness and discomfort. She heard Miss Plattford pass the door—should she knock? She hesitated for a moment, from the fear of punishment should she discover herself, and in that moment her governess was out of reach of her voice. Again she strained her ears to listen, and when the last footsteps had died into silence, and she was convinced that every member of the family had retired to rest, she lay down crouching in one of the corners of the narrow chamber and fairly sobbed. After some slight attempts at sleep—from which she would now start into a consciousness of her situation, shuddering with feverish apprehension, then doze again and wake shivering with the cold—she at length determined to seek in the apartment for something in which she could wrap herself. She had not felt far before she found a tablecloth and a table baize, and delighted with these acquisitions, she rolled herself up in them, and soon fell into a profound sleep, from which she was roused at an early hour in the morning by the gentle voice of Harriette.

Harriette had waked before the usual hour for rising, and accidentally perceived that Miss Maxwell was not in her bed. She saw that the other young ladies were in theirs, and immediately called to Miss Cox, to ask if she knew what was become of her friend. Miss Cox hesitated and Harriette could get no satisfactory answer from her. She said she did not know, but in such a tone that Harriette felt convinced that there was something that remained untold. She then spoke to Margaret, who readily mentioned a part of what had happened, and that she thought

that "perhaps Selina might be in the pantry." Without waiting to give her pupils a lecture on their mean, selfish, and unfeeling conduct, Harriette hastened to the place suggested by Margaret and there found poor Selina fast asleep in the corner, wrapped up to the chin in the blue baize with a yellow fringe, and the big tears rolling forth from beneath her eyelids.

Selina was too much cramped at first to be able to stand, but with the assistance of Harriette she contrived to get up to her room. She was put to bed, and her kind deliverer then descended, and telling the servant that Miss Maxwell was indisposed she asked her to send up a large breakfast basin of tea, and having administered this potion, and chafed her patient's hands and feet until she was thoroughly warm, Selina was desired to compose herself, and soon fell into a most comfortable sleep, from which she did not awake until the middle of the day.

Miss Cox was very ill, but she endeavoured to conceal it as much as possible from observation. Towards the afternoon, however, she became so seriously indisposed that Miss Percivale remarked it, and inquired what was the matter.

Selina was at this time in Miss Plattford's room, whither she had gone at the earnest entreaty of Harriette to confess what she had done, and to ask for pardon. Miss Plattford looked more vexed and disappointed than angry, and insisted upon knowing who were the accomplices in this theft, and which of them suggested it. She even asked if it were not Miss Cox. Selina seemed unwilling to reply to these questions, or to implicate her companions, but her silence was a sufficient answer. This was a death-blow to Miss Plattford's plan of putting a well-disposed and ill-disposed girl in pairs, for the sake of benefitting the latter, and in this lay the evident concern now depicted on her countenance. She spoke earnestly of the impropriety of such conduct, yet so kindly, that she brought tears of heart-felt penitence from the eyes of her favourite.

With the intercession of Harriette, who also felt greatly interested in her *protégée*, and with many expressions of sorrow from the fair delinquent herself, Miss Plattford easily forgave the offence; and this interview being ended the governess went to examine the devastations committed

in her pantry. Every plate and dish was cleared; yet one only object rivetted the attention of Miss Plattford—this was a jar labelled “Ointment for broken chilblains,” which, uncovered and having a table spoon standing erect in it, had evidently lost no small portion of its contents. “Was it possible,” she thought, “that one of the children could have eaten this nauseous compound?” With this idea Miss Plattford turned from the room to make some inquiries, when she met Miss Percivale in the act of conducting Miss Cox up-stairs to bed, who was almost unequal to moving from faintness and pain. She was so ill that she was obliged to have a medical attendant, and for several days she was confined to her bed. During this time she confessed having eaten *something*, she did not know what, out of a jar, which sufficiently accounted for her indisposition; and Miss Plattford, thinking that she had experienced quite punishment enough for her greediness and theft, and considering it therefore unnecessary that she should receive any retribution at her hands, granted Miss Cox also a free pardon, and in the course of a few weeks the whole affair (if not forgotten) entirely ceased to be alluded to.

Harriette, was on one occasion waiting in the drawing-room to speak to Miss Plattford, on some subject of business connected with the routine of her present occupation, when carelessly taking up a newspaper, which lay on the table near her, and running her eye listlessly over its pages, her attention was quickly rivetted on the following announcement. “At Florence, on the — ultimo, Lord Grenville to Eliza Rosalind, the only daughter of Sir Arthur Falkland, knt., of Portman Square, and Edgbrook Park, in the county of ——.”

Harriette was very much astonished at this unexpected news, for neither she nor her mother had heard from the Falklands, excepting on one occasion, since they had come into the country; and that was only in a short note from Lady Falkland, who stated, that instead of going to Brighton, they had changed their plans, and were on the eve of their departure for the continent, as the season had just concluded in town. But Harriette's surprise was not now much greater on hearing of this fact, than would have been that of the fair bride herself, had any one predicted on the

eve of their approaching *fête*, when we last parted, that such an alliance awaited her.

We left Miss Falkland when her mind was busily engaged with the important affairs preparatory to her mother's splendid entertainment, and in also forming schemes which should entirely conceal the deep mortification she had experienced from Sir Arthur's account of Lord Grenville's offensive language, when speaking of her. It did not occupy much time, ere she had fully arranged her plans of retaliation; she would treat him with disdain, and this seeming only as the effect of caprice, would, she felt convinced, annoy his lordship far more effectually than any other method she could adopt.

Lady Falkland also had succeeded in her efforts to soothe the irritation of her husband's feelings on the same subject, urging that "Lord Grenville was a thoughtless young man, that young men say a thousand things to their companions that they never mean at the time, and that are never thought of afterwards." That it would be in bad taste, and very unpleasant to dear Eliza, for whose enjoyment the ball was given, should Sir Arthur take any steps towards resenting what had past." Sir Arthur was, as has been before observed, a good-natured man, and in consideration of his wife's amiable compliance with his wishes regarding the Brownes, he easily yielded to her entreaties. The evening arrived, and everything was arranged in superb style; and whether the lavish expense was in honour of the distinguished guests, or to gratify the pride of the hostess, by a display of such unwonted magnificence, is best known to those who are in the habit of straining the utmost limits of their incomes for a few hours recreation.

Eliza was exquisitely dressed, and had never looked so beautiful. Her manners were courteous and her air graceful, and as every eye was bent on her, not one perhaps who gazed on the bright sunny countenance before him, ever dreamed that the shadow of a care could lie beneath such loveliness, much less could he have imagined the host of bitter thoughts that needed scarce a moment's pause to gain the mastery of her heart.

The night was not far advanced, and the rooms still continued to receive fresh guests, when Eliza caught sight of

him whose arrival she had so far anxiously awaited with no small degree of palpitation. He was standing near the door, apparently unable from the crowd to advance further into the room. And fortunately for Eliza, as her eyes glanced in that direction, they did not encounter his; so that he might still suppose her ignorant of his presence. She was at this time dancing in a quadrille with a gentleman who was strikingly handsome, and elegant in his manners, and was greatly disliked by Lord Grenville. His lordship had also on one occasion, when in conversation with Eliza, expressed his aversion to Sir Charles Fairburne, and had been rather lavish in his abuse of him. This gentleman was, however, possessed of many excellent qualities, of good standing in society, and far from meriting the strictures which had been bestowed on him by Lord Grenville.

Eliza had from the commencement of the evening assumed her part, and had appeared pleased with herself and with everyone around her; and the happy concurrence of events which found her dancing and in agreeable conversation with a person so greatly disliked by Lord Grenville, at the moment too, when she felt herself to be the one only object of his lordship's attention, gave a fresh impetus to her efforts to appear fascinating and occupied. The quadrille concluded, and still she was on Sir Charles's arm, and engaged to him for the following valse.

Lord Grenville had always admired the delicate beauty of Miss Falkland's countenance, but he never saw her to such advantage as on the present occasion, nor had been so struck with the grace and elegance of her whole appearance. From the moving of the company, in consequence of the conclusion of the quadrilles, he might have advanced from his position near the door into the saloons, but on seeing with whom Miss Falkland was at the time engaged, he determined on remaining where he was, with the two young friends who had accompanied him. He was not fond of dancing, and seldom joined in the amusement, excepting when a little intercourse with some particularly fair and favoured partner was the motive. There was no lack on the present occasion of beautiful faces and lovely forms, which would have attracted the attention of the most fastidious, but some strong feeling, between jealousy and admiration, and partaking of both, rivetted his observation to the fair daughter of the house

and her almost hated partner. He therefore waited until the valse had concluded, when seeing that Eliza was seated on a sofa near her mother, and that Sir Charles had moved into another room, he advanced with a careless step towards them. Lady Falkland received him with her usual gracious and encouraging smile, and Eliza with the same affable indifference of manner, which had distinguished her conduct to everyone on this memorable evening; to all, in fact, but Sir Charles Fairburne. To Lord Grenville, who perhaps for the first time had considered her reception of him as a matter of any importance, this uncertainty of demeanour was to a slight degree perplexing, and especially coming from one whom he felt convinced must be conscious that she was favoured with his admiration. Such conduct offered a problem, which his intellects could not solve. He did not, however, allow any expression of countenance to betray the surprise he felt, and after a little conversation with the mother and daughter, he asked for the pleasure of Miss Falkland's hand during the next valse.

With an affected laugh,¹ Eliza replied, "Thank you, but I am really engaged so deeply, that I have given up keeping the account myself, and have asked mamma to remember for me, I dare say she can answer. Mamma, dear," continued she, turning towards that relative, as she spoke, "how many engagements have I at present to fulfil?"

"Dear Eliza, how very silly that is. I hope Lord Grenville is aware that, from being our only darling, you are consequently a spoilt child."

"Petted," lipsed his lordship, with a drawl, "doubtless, that must be unavoidable, but spoilt, oh, no!"

¹ Let no one imagine when the author speaks of a laugh, that she by any means intends to revert to an ordinary corporeal laugh. Such things happily are out of date in days of such refinement as the present. Still, there is a sad sameness in a smile, and therefore, when any lady is endowed by nature, or has had the ability to acquire, by skill and perseverance, a musical laugh, a joyous, light, ephemeral thing, she need not fear to use it, as it will add greatly to the effect of her conversation, little sortics, and replies, and might be admissible even in the highest circles.

Lady Falkland smiled a reply of maternal approbation, when Lord Grenville turned towards her daughter, "Are you inexorable, Miss Falkland? engaged sixteen dances! and must I wait that tedious time? cruel, positively cruel!"

"Say three, Eliza," replied her mother, "my daughter will with pleasure feel herself engaged to you, after the next three dances."

"No, indeed, mamma! Lord Grenville only asks me out of compliment, and he will not thank you for such unwished for zeal in his service."

"Monstrous! Miss Falkland, positively monstrous! What can I say? But you *will* confer on me this favour, yes, the fourth dance; and what is to become of me in the meanwhile?"

Sir Charles Fairburne, who had just then joined them, quickly decided his lordship as to what he would do with himself. He appeared almost to recoil at the approach of the young baronet, returned his recognition with a haughty, distant bow, and again reminding Eliza of her engagement, moved onward to another room.

"Confound that fellow," muttered Lord Grenville, "for putting himself in my way, and a plague on those women, too! what fools they make of us constantly. What care I about dancing with her? Is there need for me to cringe and fawn for the honour of her hand?" A mirror which at this moment reflected the handsome figure of his lordship, brought to a speedy conclusion this mental soliloquy, and exchanged every feeling of angry petulance for one of a far more pleasing and agreeable nature. Having for a brief space contemplated "with answering looks of sympathy and love" the manly image before him, he passed the delicate white fingers of his right hand through the rich dark curls which shaded his forehead, arranged with greater nicety his cravat, and then with an animated and complaisant air wended his way through the crowded apartments. He paused occasionally to recognize and speak to such of his acquaintance as he deemed most worthy of his attention, and then rejoining the two friends who had accompanied him on his entry, led them off to the refreshment rooms. With the aid of the champagne bottle, that masculine panacea for all the maladies of life,

whether moral or physical, he succeeded in confirming for a time the agreeable sentiments of self-approval suggested by the mirror; but unfortunately the time was long ere he was to claim his partner in the dance, and having continued to *refresh* himself rather longer than was absolutely necessary, he fell again, and far more completely and irrevocably, into the sentimental and irritable. Eliza and Sir Charles now occupied all his thoughts, and in this mood he returned to the dancing-room. Miss Falkland had just concluded a valse with Sir Charles Fairburne, which although it had been but the third time they had danced together, yet it naturally appeared to Lord Grenville that they had been partners for the whole evening, since he had seen her only when engaged with the baronet.

He almost thought of quitting the house in displeasure; "but no, it was impossible, if he wished to please, that Sir Charles could have any chance," and he was determined to know whether that man was his rival or not. He therefore, after a few preparatory sentences, led off Eliza to the arena. The first valse was finished, when offering his arm, he conducted Miss Falkland to a seat. Solitude is never greater than in a crowd, if we wish to make it so; and opportunities for saying all we would, *à l'oreille*, are never greater than in a ball-room, where everyone is so engaged in his own little circle of vanity or amusement, that he has no time nor thought to bestow on others. And in this public retirement did Lord Grenville, interrupted only by two or three vales, contrive to carry on the following conversation.

"I suppose, Miss Falkland, that I have reason to feel obliged for the favour of a valse this evening. I thought you disposed to be very cruel when I first had the pleasure of addressing you."

"Why so? I imagined that in such cases we were to consider ourselves as the obliged party, although I cannot say that it is at all in accordance with my ideas."

"It is not improbable that Miss Falkland can think so with regard to other ladies, but in her own case such a thought would be preposterous. If I might presume so far, I would venture to hint that you are capricious."

"I should hope so, indeed; for if it were not for this

valuable gift with which kind nature has endowed some of us, how could we manage you, or make you constant?"

"Charming creature! is that the history of your power? Oh, no! Then if you will not disown being capricious, can you be unkind?"

"If I were disposed to be unamiable or fanciful, I should not have thought it possible that so insignificant a circumstance could have affected Lord Grenville, nor can I understand him when he talks of my being unkind."

"Not affect me! Not your conduct affect me!" replied his lordship with some rapidity and earnestness of manner. "Good heavens! Can you possibly be ignorant of my long-continued admiration, my devotion, my.....?"

"Indeed I was not aware of the honour you did me, nor can I believe otherwise than that you are now trifling for your own amusement, and at my expense."

"Can you think me so base? Oh! no, you are too unkind. Lovely creature, you know your power, and will take advantage!"

"I really do not understand you; pray let us drop so foolish a subject."

"Not understand me? Good heavens! Will you then do me one favour? Will you tell me whether that Sir Charles Fair—whether your feelings are engaged, or interested, I would say, with that man?"

"Lord Grenville must have some better right to ask such a question than any with which I am acquainted, before I....."

"I have the right," interrupted Lord Grenville, "to ask that question which every man must feel to be his when his attentions have encountered no discouragement, and when he feels that his happiness is staked in the reply."

"Really I cannot understand you," replied Eliza, with a restlessness as if still willing to change the topic of their conversation.

"Not understand me! What have I said that is unintelligible? or what has my conduct been hitherto?"

"I really hardly know. I have heard a great deal about admiration and devotion from you this evening, as well as on former occasions; but we are taught to believe that gentlemen learn by heart these strings of empty,

high-sounding words before they come into company, and pour them indiscriminately into the ears of their partners, in the hope of imposing on their credulity. But we all prefer sincerity to flattery, I believe."

"Miss Falkland, if I were not too seriously disposed, I might smile at your raillery. But do I utter things which I do not mean? Ask my friends. If you will be blind yourself, ask them of my admiration, my long-continued love and affection! Will you now answer me respecting that fellow? Has he ingratiated himself to my prejudice? does he hold a prior interest in your heart? Excuse my impatience."—Alas! the champagne was taking a prominent part in his lordship's share of the conversation.

"You are really running on in a strange manner. Surely you do not know all you are saying, or perhaps it has no meaning—pray let us join mamma."

"What!" cried he, with still more earnestness, and an expression as if he were trying to be as intelligent as he could, "do you still doubt me? Must I kneel and swear that I love you, and that nothing can make me happy but a return of this affection, before you will reply to my question?"

"Indeed your vehemence alarms me—pray be tranquil," said Eliza, in a tone almost approaching to a whimper, and then changing it into one more firm, yet greatly subdued, she added, "No one can possess the shadow of an interest with me, should Lord Grenville *really* wish it otherwise. Pray lead me to mamma."

"Thank you—thank you, lovely creature! Pray forgive—*do* pardon me! I see that I have caused you annoyance. How shall I atone for my offence?" and the little fingers, which lay enclosed in white kid upon his arm, were pressed nearer to the embroidered waistcoat.

"I do not know what papa would say if he knew that you had spoken to me before you had addressed yourself to him upon this subject."

"Oh! I will see him the first thing in the morning. But here is Lady Falkland, and I must ascertain from her, before we part, how great may be my chance with Sir Arthur on the morrow."

The rooms had gradually been thinning during this interview, and the festivity was now drawing towards its

conclusion. Lady Falkland had for some time been an unobserved listener to all that had passed between her daughter and the young nobleman; but whether she took up this position intentionally, or arrived accidentally in the neighbourhood of that which interested her so deeply, was best known to herself, and others of the lynx-eyed tribe of mammas and maiden aunts, who track the heels of their young *protégées*, when fortune favours them with an eligible and assiduous partner.

Having given evident proof that she had accidentally overheard the last sentence uttered by Lord Grenville, Lady Falkland advanced towards them, saying—

“Eliza, dear! take my arm. You look pale. Is anything the matter?” and then turned an inquiring look on his lordship for further explanation.

“I fear that I am to blame, Lady Falkland—pardon me. May I hope for your sanction for waiting on Sir Arthur to-morrow?”

“Indeed! I think it might have been better to have had an interview either with Sir Arthur or me first;” but she added with an encouraging smile, “we must, however, at times overlook and forgive the faults of young heads and warm hearts.”

“With your permission, I will see Sir Arthur to-morrow. Good night, good night!”

Thus saying, the successful suitor pressed the hand of both mother and daughter with equal demonstrations of tenderness, and with his head very much occupied by champagne, and his heart with hope, he turned from the gay and dazzling apartments, threw himself into his cabriolet, which awaited him, and returned home.

We will not pause to tell of the conversation which ensued in Lady Falkland's dressing-room after the guests had departed, and the services of their Abigails were no longer required, nor of the congratulations bestowed by the too happy mamma on her “dear Eliza” at her unexampled cleverness and good fortune. Bright visions of future splendour and magnificence continued to occupy their minds, until the brighter rays of a summer sun outshone their dreams, and sent them to their pillows. Mother and daughter both fell asleep ere reflection had suggested one grave thought respecting these opening

prospects, than such as were connected with the acquisition of a coronet !

Did not the mother think of the disposition or character of him to whose care she was thus willingly about to commit the happiness of her child? No, for the present it was sufficient that a title was within their grasp, and should any minor evils arise, philosophy would doubtless enable the young wife to make the best of them, and such trifling annoyances as might follow an ill-assorted marriage, must sink into insignificance before so great a good !

Thus, perhaps, would Lady Falkland have argued had a doubt regarding the advantageous result of Lord Grenville's suite suggested itself. But where was the congeniality of mind, the mutual respect and regard which must form the basis of a happy union? Without these, how little reason had they for rejoicing, or need of congratulations for the bride-elect.

We now turn to Lord Grenville, who slept late on the following morning. At length he roused himself with an effort. He felt oppressed with the incubus of some thought, some dream. He rang the bell, and ordered a glass of soda water; with this refreshing draught, a little of the mist that hung about his intellects began to dissipate itself.

"Was I at Falkland's last night?" he muttered internally; "yes, surely—proposed—accepted—what have I been dreaming? What, Frank, not hooked at last? Pooh, nonsense! no one will believe that—a dream, a mere dream! I must rise, and endeavour to clear this mystery, and I hope leave such fancies on my pillow."

The toilet completed, and with the aid of a second and a third glass of Schweppes, we follow his lordship to the sitting-room, the length of which he continued to pace back and forwards, occasionally stopping, with his eyes rivetted on the carpet while in deep rumination, at other moments bursting into a wild soliloquy. The nature of his reflections, of which we venture to give an extract, was as follows:—

"Oh! Frank Grenville! ha, ha! is this you? Impossible. Already half engaged. What could you be thinking of? Falkland's champagne was too excellent! ha,

ha! Already half a domestic man. I must be off positively. Packet leaves Gravesend at four this very day. Yet she is a lovely creature—girl values me.—Can I have thought and said all I did only a few hours since, and now wish it all unsaid? *Varium et mutabile*, I find applies to us as frequently as to the fair sex. Ho, ho! 'pon honour, an hour hence, and 'papa' has nailed me. I'll consult with.....No, that will never do. Give my friends the power of calling me as great a fool as I really am. I will be my own judge in this matter. I'll reckon the arguments for and against, and then sum up.

"Arguments for—No such thing as true love. Sentimental days gone by. Human nature, with human schemes and liaisons imperfect. No happiness equal to what I picture in youth. All the poetry of my life gone. Maybe I can of realities, and be content. Miss Falkland exquisitely beautiful—good fortune, if I needed that no brothers—my taste will be approved by some—I'm luck envied by others. She will look divine in the circle, and finally, and not least in importance, that Fatherburne shall not have her. Against—Don't care enough about the girl to wish to make her the partner of my life. Suspect she is vain, and fond of admiration. Suspect that were I plain Mr. Grenville I might plead in vain.

"Oh Bessy, dear Bessy! were you only a kind of a lay figure on which I hung the draperies of my youthful fancy, or a bright creature of reality?—oh, no, had you been spared, how different a being would Fatherburne now have been? The companion of my boyhood, the friend of later years, in you were personified all that is graceful, kind, and good. I loved you for yourself, and because you imparted by your very present virtues to this heart of mine, which have died long since with you. Yet more than half an angel while you walked among us, you deigned to value and return my love. Heaven, your native clime, has reclaimed its own, and the world, the cold, senseless, hated world must take me. How does this empty, sparkling thing, this butterfly, in an hour, show beside my Bessy? she, who was a child or rather a spirit of nature, that walked unscathed, unsullied amid the splendour, the vanities, or follies that surrounded her. To find her likeness in the dazzli-

crowds in which I now move is vain, and were I to seek some simple-hearted girl of lower rank, and trick her out in the finery which is necessary in my station, might she not when dressed out in a little new authority or consequence, play such antics before high heaven as make..."

The door was suddenly thrown wide open, and the servant announcing "Mr. Willoughby," the gentleman who had been already introduced as having offered a slight caution to Lord Grenville, when overheard by Sir Arthur Falkland, entered the apartment.

"How now, my dear Grenville, what is the matter? You appear doing *Il penseroso* in most tragic style. Nothing serious I hope—courting some wayward muse; hipped with late excitement, late hours, and want of fresh air, or....."

"I mind not your raillery," replied Lord Grenville, endeavouring to change the melancholy which had contracted the muscles of his face, and trying to force a smile. "You labour under a mistake; so far from being unhappy, I may consider this as one of the happiest days of my life."

"Eh, poetry! in a poetic frame of mind, I suppose," said his friend, "for there is a pleasure in poetic pain which only poets know, and poets, though very happy creatures, no doubt, are generally represented to us in their portraits with a grim, ghastly look of happiness, which to sober-minded individuals like myself is somewhat unintelligible, and not quite compatible with our notions of enjoyment. But setting aside all reference to the muse, tell me honestly, Grenville—you were at Falkland's last night, and this woe-begone expression says that my counsel fell on unheeding ears. My dear fellow, pardon me, but you have pushed matters further than your cooler judgment can approve. Eh?"

"Pushed matters further! excuse me, but I have without the aid of any friend's counsel done that which I imagine will contribute most to my own happiness. I have made an appointment....."

"I beg your pardon, Grenville, if I have offended you, you must believe that that was far from my intention, but you used occasionally to jest with me regarding Miss Falkland, and it was only under the impression of your

heart being in *statu quo* that I now obtruded on you little joke; no one can more sincerely wish you happier than I do. You are engaged then?"

"No, I spoke to her last night, and am to see Sir Arthur this morning; I admire her extremely, and see no reason why we may not be very happy."

"Admire!" returned the visitor, and paused while he changed the matter of the sentence that was going to follow the ejaculation. "Every one must admire Miss Falkland; I think if you happen to find in her a good wife there is some hope of you. I always told you there was a great deal of good in your composition, that only required being drawn out and expanded. My superior years, and long friendship, must offer an excuse, if you think me presuming."

A warm shake of the hand was the only answer which Lord Grenville gave. His heart did not bear witness what his lips from pride and self-importance would have uttered, "that he could not have selected a companion better suited to him, or to whom he was more devotedly attached, that he believed himself to be a very fortunate man, and had every prospect of happiness before him. This is, perhaps, very nearly what he might have wished to have said, but had not the courage to utter to so true a friend as Willoughby sentiments so foreign to his real thoughts.

The shake of the hand expressed cordiality, and the visitor was at liberty to interpret Lord Grenville's silence as he best pleased. The hour had nearly arrived at which his lordship was to repair to Portman Square, and his friends soon after parted. Everything was soon put on train for the accomplishment of this much-valued union. The papa had been duly prepared to receive with courtesy the suitor's proposal; from having been persuaded against his better judgment (by the tears of his wife and daughter and assurances "that their hearts must be broken, and on an untimely grave receive them both did Sir Arthur throw Eliza in her disinterested attachment." It is sufficient to add that, with papa's permission, a few hours later, the happy pair were engaged.

Brighton was given up, a tour on the continent preferred in its place; and after a short period of a few months

Lord Grenville rejoined the Falklands at Florence, where the ceremony of their marriage took place, as already stated in the provincial paper which had conveyed the first intelligence of the event to her cousin Harriette Browne.

It is not the intention of these pages to trace the bride and bridegroom in their tours or in their gaieties abroad. It will be sufficient to state that motives of economy tempted Sir Arthur and Lady Falkland to remain in France for a few years, and that a fondness for change and fresh excitement led Lord and Lady Grenville to project a tour into Greece, Egypt, Syria, &c., and we shall leave them with so strong a tendency eastward that perhaps they may have returned to England through America ere the reader will meet with them again. Sufficient for this history is it to state that they got on as miserably as is usual with most persons who have the temerity to venture on a *mariage de convenance*.

CHAPTER XX.

As soon as Miss Plattford had systematized to the satisfaction of her own mind her ideas relative to the art of conversing, a day was fixed on for imparting to her pupils the valuable result of her cogitations.

Twenty of the elder and most clever young ladies were selected to form a class, while the others were to sit round and listen attentively to what was going forward, and gain as much in this way as their less competent understandings could retain. The class was standing around the instructor, each pupil having on her most sensible face, when Miss Plattford addressed them as follows:

"It is a very general remark, how extremely insipid and unprofitable is the conversation of the young ladies of the present day, even of those who are considered among the most highly educated and accomplished. To remedy this evil will be a glorious achievement, and I think it may be effectually attained by proceeding systematically. Let conversation, then, be rendered instructive in an intellectual and a moral point of view, and let these two objects be constantly borne in mind, and both will be attained together. Let the imparting of some piece of valuable information be the basis of conversation (and a wide field opens to our view from whence to select) and seldom can two young persons come together where mutual advantage may not be gained in this way. The whole range of history, philosophy, and science presents itself, and whatever of these vast stores is admitted to the understanding may be so viewed as to yield some moral lesson, available for the guidance of conduct and exercise of the higher faculties of the soul.

"Miss Raymond, stand on both feet, if you please, and

do not yawn. Unless you endeavour to interest yourself in what I am now teaching, you cannot possibly, at any future period, derive the advantage or benefit I anticipate. To carry my views into practice, I have simplified and have brought them into the smallest possible compass of which I believe that they are capable. First, a piece of information is to be given, or an anecdote recited. Then enlarge or elucidate. Let Memory bring forth her rich stores of previous experience to bear upon that point—perhaps in the form of a quotation from some favourite poet, or by an incident from real life, which is in a degree similar. Suffer Imagination, also decked out in her bright and gaudy tints, to fling in her rich flowers of poetry, rife with fresh and new ideas, and conclude the whole with some.....some.....moral reflection, useful in its result on our conduct and in our intercourse with the world.

“The choice also of the subject must be adapted to the tastes and, to a certain prescribed extent, to the habits and pursuits of the individual whom you address, at the same time carefully guarding against any appearance of descending too minutely to his peculiar profession or occupation, lest you give him cause to imagine that you are making any effort to adapt yourself to his capacity. For instance, you must avoid talking to a medical man of illness and physic; to a lawyer, of law; to a clergyman, of paupers, tithes, or clothing clubs, and, above all, in addressing the latter, never set yourself up to ‘talk virtuous.’ Few men are proud of their profession, whatever it may be, besides which they have that in their heads during the whole day, and in society they seek relaxation and change, added to which, they do not like it to be supposed that they are incapable of conversing on any other topics. You may occasionally draw from a soldier, sailor, or traveller, the incidents of his past life, and he will like to ‘fight his battles o’er again,’ but, as you value your own peace,” turning to Miss Percivale for a smile of sympathy and approval, as the playful thought occurred to her, “never lead a would-be hero to talk of *his* experience—one who knows nothing of war, but playing the coxcomb in a livery, has never been in a campaign, and only just knows the smell of gunpowder. He will try to lead you to think of him as a brave and blood-thirsty warrior, and should he

once be humoured by you in this respect you will be incessantly subjected to histories of the most shocking description—of starved garrisons and hair-breadth escapes—all taken out of the lives of other men and fitted to himself.”

Encountering only a look of dignified censure on the countenance of the matter-of-fact teacher, Miss Plattford continued to address her playfully—

“To be sure, Miss Percivale, this does not suit the school-room, but the worst of having a fertile imagination is, that it cannot be prescribed within certain limits, but I will return from my digression.” Having for a moment paused to glance at a few notes written in shorthand on pocketbook, Miss Plattford continued—

“Well, my dears, the last thing to be attended to for the purpose of promoting a pleasurable and cheerful discussion is, that a liveliness of manner must be assumed to give tone, and to throw a charm and piquancy into the most trifling subject. Some persons have the invaluable art, rather the innate power, of giving an interest to the most ordinary objects that come under their notice. For instance, a needle and thread are rife with ideas to an inventive mind. The former is an instrument entailed as a curse on fallen women and tailors, for the sin of the mother, Eve, while, in its countless results, it procures mankind the comforts, the elegancies, and the beautiful decorations of our menage, our drawing-rooms, and ourselves! This I am sorry to say is but a poor instance of the faculty which I wish to convey to you, my dears, yet a dull and unawakened mind would only see in them a little piece of bright steel and a little end of thread. The former is a mineral, brought from the bowels of our mother earth, where I most heartily wish it had ever remained ere it had taken a form which is associated in my mind with little else than weariness and disgust. How many hands are employed in its formation, which are lingering on a living death in our confined, unhealthy factories? The latter is a twisted, vegetable fibre, brought from a far distant land, and with much labour is thus rendered fit for our use.

“I should now like to examine how much you have already gained by this lecture, and I shall, as we go on

be able further to explain my views. Miss Hoggett, what did I say was the first thing to be attended to?"

"Suitableness, ma'am, or an agreement between the subject proposed and the person addressed," replied that young lady at the head of the class, rapidly hurrying over the words, and with a great appearance of self-satisfaction.

"Very well, my dear, very well. Now elucidate or give me an instance if you can, my dear—do not be alarmed. Miss Bydell, what are you about?"

"She is quarrelling with her little sister, ma'am," replied Miss Percivale. "I can get no peace with them, and I have punished them both three times to-day already."

"Miss Bydell!" said the governess in a severe tone, stand up on the form this moment—do you hear me? Miss Lucy Bydell, go into the corner. Miss Percivale, have the goodness to put Miss Lucy's pinafore over her head, and turn her face into the corner."

While this was being executed, Miss Plattford was occupied in referring to her note-book. All was soon restored to tranquillity; Miss Percivale had resumed her seat, and nothing but the smothered sobs of Miss Lucy, emanating from beneath the folds of brown holland, were to be heard, when the governess continued speaking—

"No, Miss Hoggett, though you answered so readily I see you were wrong. The first thing I mentioned was, that 'a piece of information should be given, or an anecdote related.' What was the second, Miss Cox?"

"Suitableness, ma'am?" in a hesitating tone of interrogation.

"I did not use the word suitable, I said adaptation; but you are wrong, for that was not the second in importance which I mentioned; it was the last. Miss Maxwell—the second? Come, my dear."

"Memory and imagination were to fling in their flowers of poetry with gaudy tints."

"Selina! you know better how to answer," said Miss Plattford, looking sternly at Miss Maxwell, but encountering in her favourite's countenance a pretty expression of arch simplicity which she could but too well interpret, she changed her manner so as not to appear conscious that her spoilt child was presuming to quiz. "No, my dear; perhaps all at once you may not be able to command the

subject, or see into the beauties of this system, I will therefore tell you this time. The second thing required to elucidate, that is, explain and enlarge. What next necessary, Miss Thornton?"

"A moral reflection, useful in its results on our conduct."

"Very well, Miss Thornton; you, my dear, are always attentive."

The poor young lady thus commended reddened painfully; and why was this? Was praise unwelcome to her ear? No, it was unusual. She was plain, ungainly, and uncouth in all her ways, and she knew it; and while she shrunk painfully from any notice, yet she would have made any personal sacrifice to earn a pittance of approbation. But this personal sacrifice must have been made of secrecy, for pride, as it is too frequently and hastily termed, or rather an over-refined sensitiveness and timidity withheld her from making any advance towards others lest she should encounter unkindness, rebuffs, or ridicule. She consequently led a solitary and painful life, considered by her companions as haughty, cold, selfish and indifferent, who consequently held but little intercourse with her; yet had they known the kind, the gentle feminine heart that beat beneath that uninteresting exterior, she would have been the favourite of the whole house. She then continued the morning's task.

"Miss Farwell, what was the last requisite? Speak do you hear me?—do not detain me. If you do not know say so."

"No, ma'am," replied Miss Farwell.

"Then you are very naughty and inattentive. Mr. Raymond, you reply," continued Miss Plattford, turning to another.

"Suitableness, ma'am, or adaptation."

"No; bless me, I am perfectly wearied with your '*suitableness*' and '*adaptation*;' you seem none of you able to say anything else, and I question if you rightly understand the meaning of the words. Miss Hogge, what is the meaning of adapting your conversation to the person whom you address?"

"To talk to you of kindness, ma'am, because you are always kind."

"Nonsense! that is quite silly. If one of the younger children had said it, I should not have been much surprised; but for you, at the head of the class, it is quite..... but I imagine your intention was right, though your judgment was in error. Miss Cox next—what have you to say?"

"I do not know, ma'am; it is so very hard to understand."

"Pooh!—to those who are not interested, and you are all gaping now. What a set of unsatisfactory dunces I have around me! Oh! Miss Percivale, where is to be found the pure, the elevated, intellectual delight which I once pictured to myself, in seeing a young flower expand to a full maturity of beauty beneath my fostering care? The pleasure of imparting new ideas to an opening mind is but a mere delusive dream! Miss Maxwell," continued Miss Plattford, in a wearied, disappointed tone, "tell me, my dear, if you can, what I mean when I say that you must converse with your companions on those subjects which are most interesting to them, or adapted to their peculiar tastes."

"To talk to Sarah Cox about confectionary and cheesecakes, ma'am."

"That is better, because you evidently understand," said Miss Plattford, good-naturedly overlooking the mischievous intention of her incorrigible pupils in her anxiety to pursue her favourite subject in this lesson. "I hope you do not mean to be pert," she added, "because fun is misplaced here, Selina. I can, however, perhaps give you a more definite rule for the selection of subjects, which shall be adapted for every quality of mind in the parties with whom you are probably destined to communicate for several years to come. And yet, Miss Percivale," continued the governess, turning again towards her assistant as she spoke, "still to converse with propriety, a certain tact, a delicate perception, an insight into character, are absolutely essential. And this insight into character must be derived from the practical knowledge of phrenology, and a quick observation of the peculiar phenomena of each mind presented to our notice, evinced either by habits of thought or conduct, visible in their whole demeanour. All this appears to me to be *necessary* to make an agree-

able conversationalist, and I fear this can never be imparted, yet still I must not despair but that I may, at any rate, do much towards making my pupils talk discreetly."

After a pause, during which Miss Percivale bowed an assent, being well aware that no answer was expected, and not knowing exactly how to reply, Miss Plattford returned to her class. "Miss Raymond, I dare say that now you have had time for reflection, you can tell me what I mean by '*adaptation*.'"

"No, ma'am, I cannot think of anything to say, but I know very well what would not be agreeable. I ought not to talk to Miss Farwell about duelling, because her papa was shot, and killed in a duel; nor to Miss Lyndell about horses, because her papa, and uncle and brother are all horse-dealers; nor to Miss Smithers about grocery, because before he was a gentleman, her father was a grocer; nor to Miss Dougan about....."

"Stop! Miss Raymond, stop! I say," exclaimed Miss Plattford, hastily endeavouring to arrest the spiteful young lady, who had the history of her less aristocratic school-fellows apparently at her fingers' ends, and was running over the list as rapidly as possible, without seeming conscious of the pain and annoyance she was causing. "I wish to hear no such nonsense. You should—but I shall conclude the task now. I cannot say that I am pleased. I thought you all loved me. You have, however, given me a great deal of trouble this morning. The subject is not an easy one, and I must *hope* that you have done your best. At the end of the week I shall examine you again, to see how much you remember of what I have said, by which time I shall have prepared a short catechism on the subject, which I should wish you to learn perfectly. Meanwhile I should like you to practise among yourselves to converse discreetly, on the plan which I have now explained to you. The elder can teach the younger, which will prepare you all for me; and Miss Percivale will, I know, be so kind as to supply you, should you feel deficient, with incidents historical, biographical, or philosophical, on which you may discourse."

Miss Plattford then rose, put her notes into her reticule, and was leaving the room, when Selina joined her, and said in a whisper—

"We shall all be very sorry if we have vexed you, ma'am. I hope that you are not displeased with us."

"No, my dear, not now," replied the good-natured governess, impressing a kiss on the fair forehead of her pupil. "No, go and tell them so from me. I shall send Marton with a few apples for you all, so you must try to be good children, if you really love me."

Miss Plattford left the room, and Selina returned to her companions.

"Bonnets on, young ladies! and turn out in the garden this minute, all of you, as fast as you can!" screamed Miss Percivale.

When the pupils had dispersed, and Miss Percivale and Harriette were left alone, the head teacher said, in a low tone, "Dear me, Miss Browne, this may be all very fine and clever for those who like it, but I think it is very silly to bring such nonsense into the school-room, wasting our time, and the young people's as well. What can the poor children make of it? The best thing, I think, is to teach children to hold their tongues, and listen to what their betters say. What do you say, Miss Browne?"

"I agree with you partly, for I do not think it will effect much good."

"Good! why my dear Miss Browne, good! why it can effect nothing but harm, as I fear we shall see very soon. Miss Plattford is very clever, if she would but go on in the old way steadily; but what will the children have to show for these days so wasted? Besides, she spoils the children by her good nature; they take liberties with her. Only fancy Miss Maxwell talking in that way to Mrs. Durett, or me even. There'll be no such thing as subordination among them soon, I can see that very plainly. I can prophecy the parents won't like it, and she'll lose her school, which is now a good one, if she continues to indulge in these vagaries."

"I hope not," replied Harriette. "Shall we take a few turns in the garden?"

"With all my heart," answered the head teacher; "but you must not expect me to be very agreeable, for this work has put me out sadly, and it makes me quite cross. At Forester House, why bless me, how would Mrs. Durett have put up with these new-fangled vagaries! It

was rather dull to be sure, sometimes, with always the same things over and over again. There was Murray's Grammar, Exercises, Parsing, Orthography, Dictation, Ladies' Geography, Mangnall, Histories of England, Rome, Four Empires of the East, Dates, French Kings, accommodated to the understandings of the different classes, from Goldsmith and Sharon Turner, down to Pinnock's Catechisms. But there everyone knew what she was about, and when a pupil had gone through the above publications five or six times, and had reached Sharon Turner, it was generally time for her to leave school. If not, she had but to go back a little, and rub up more perfectly what she had before learnt and read. But here the mind is kept in a constant state of excitement. Now, the English teachers have classic 'ologies' with various names a yard and a half long to learn, before they can teach a word to their pupils. And what are the children the better for it?

"Here, in the country," continued she, "they only go home to astonish and frighten their parents, who are unacquainted with these fine things. The children, you must be aware, in a country town like this, are chiefly the daughters of quiet, professional men, or small merchants. These men have married young, before they had the prospect of realizing the fortunes which now raise them in society. Their wives, therefore, had been selected with more attention to their amiable and domestic qualities than for outward accomplishments. Many of them have had very little education, as it is now pursued; and those who have had greater advantages before their marriage, what with the lapse of years and the bustling cares of the storeroom and the nursery, have lost or smothered all they once knew.

"I have a few acquaintances in the town among the parents of some of our pupils, and I believe they have sought my friendship with a view to pouring their complaints into my ear, and in the hope that I might speak to Miss Plattford on the subject and have some of their grievances redressed. One lady told me that her little girl was only grown more idle, restless, conceited, and impatient of restraint since her being at this school, and she is, I know, to be removed this vacation. 'They talk

in such a conceited way for children, it may be very fine to be learned, but I really don't think it will make the children more domestic and amiable in their homes,' said a mother to me one day; 'for an example now, I took my little girl to call with me at a friend's house, and I assure you I felt quite ashamed of her. The doctor's wife showed her some beautiful shells she had just bought of a sailor; they were large conques, I believe.' 'Oh, I don't call them handsome,' said Lucy, 'they are so common; now, for my part, I prefer the 'fossil producti,' they are not so pleasing to the eye, until you understand them, but a belamite interests me far more.' 'Bedlamite! I never heard of such a shell,' said the old lady, 'but I think your modern schools are turned into Bedlams, if all is true that I see and hear of Lawn Lodge and Miss Plattford's schemes.'

"Mrs. Tidewell, also, the banker's widow, has instituted a warm friendship with me, that is to say, she asks me to tea and supper twice in the half year; by the by, I wish I had some of her nicely fried sausages and baked potatoes now, for we always have a little bit of hot supper there, and that's very welcome after a one o'clock dinner. I know it is only for the sake of her little Rachel, but I am not proud as I used to be, and accept of kindness now from anyone that will show it me, without looking too deep into the motives of self-interest. What a *bitter* moment, Harriette, is that when, with all the generous warmth of youth, looking around with trustfulness and love, we first learn to doubt, next to see the selfishness, the falsehood, the humbug of the friends we trusted, till, in self-defence, we harden ourselves against our softer emotions, and in the end become as cold and as calculating as they; and then, in future years, to look back upon our former *self* with a sigh, to think of what we were and what we might have been. But you will escape that remorse, dear Harriette, for you keep the freshness and fragrance, may I say, of childhood about you, in spite of your necessary contact with the world.

"But I have wandered away from what I was going to tell you. Mrs. Tidewell gave me an anecdote of her little girl's absurdity one day which will, I think, make you laugh. They were taking a stroll together one afternoon

on the sea-shore, when Mrs. Tidewell picked up a pretty piece of sea-weed, and called her child's attention to the delicate fibres and beautiful variety of colours which it displayed, as she floated it in a little pool of water left by the receding tide.

" 'La, mamma,' said Rachel, 'how can you call that beautiful? why it is only a poor specimen of the *Conseria centralis*; this is a far greater treasure to me, yet I forget whether it is the *Calithamnion plumula* or the *Chylocladia parvula*. Oh, yes, I know now, it is the *Calithamnion*.'

" 'And pray, my dear Rachel, how many of these hard names have you learned like a parrot?' said the astounded mamma, 'for I do not for a moment believe that you understand the science of sea-weed-ology, as I suppose you call it, and I consider all this as detestable nonsense. A knowledge of a science may expand the mind, but this smattering which you bring home of Botany, Conchology, Mineralogy, Chemistry, and Geology, is a dangerous matter, and a perfect waste of time. At your age you cannot possibly have made any progress in even one of these sciences, and instead of deriving pleasure from the beautiful forms, structures, and variety of colours which nature presents to our sight at every turn, and which raises our thoughts to the Divine Maker of all these beautiful things, and from whose bounty we learn at length to trace all that is enjoyable and beautiful in life—instead of your having your heart softened and tuned to sing His praise, you are puzzling your poor little brains to remember a list of long words with which, in your conceit and presumption, you hope to frighten a few sensible people and make them stare. Now,' she continued, 'I shall remove you from Miss Plattford's at the end of this half year, and see if I cannot manage, with the assistance of a lady in my house, to inform your poor little ignorant head and cultivate your heart and feelings, so as to give you a taste for what is really and substantially good. I cannot bear this flash in the pan. I hope, dear Miss Percivale, I have humbled this poor child, and convinced her how little she knows, and how much there is for her to learn, but I assure you, you can hardly conceive how the child is changed, and unless I am very judicious, I do not think I shall be

able to recover her respect and affection for myself, her own mother.'

"This, you see, is Mrs. Tidewell's opinion and account of her little girl. Is it not beyond all patience to hear the parents making all these just complaints? and I assure you that Mrs. Tidewell is a shrewd, sensible woman, and has a very kind heart. Another lady told me of meeting one of our pupils in company lately, who was holding forth as one of the grown-up people. She heard her tell the old rector that she 'considered Bowdler Shakspeare a very nice poet, but that, for her part, she preferred John Milton,' and being reproved by the venerable gentleman for talking of what she did not understand, she replied—

" 'Oh, sir, but Miss Plattford says that young ladies should always talk sensibly, and that a conversation about books is indispensable for them in good society.'

" 'Pooh, pooh, child,' said the kind rector, 'very, very sad! poor little thing!'

"And this is the way that they go about exposing us and their own ignorance at the same time; it is really too provoking," said Miss Percivale. "But come, we'll talk of something else, though, poor children, I can't help pitying them." And the two teachers turned into the path where their pupils were taking their daily walk.

They had not proceeded far when they heard voices in conversation, within a little arbour, which was a favourite resort of the children when tired of play, or for learning their tasks sometimes. Teachers are considered as privileged eavesdroppers, and they stood still to listen. The voices were those of Selina Maxwell and Sarah Cox, and the conversation ran thus:

"Dear Selina," said the latter, "I wish particularly to tell you something so interesting. Can you guess what about?"

"Nonsense, Sarah, I suppose you are going to tease me with some more of dear Miss Plattford's historical, biographical, philosophical, nonsensical incidents, with moral reflections, fresh from the spring of your benighted understanding. I shall not talk such stuff; I don't understand it, and I will not lose the only pleasure we have here of a little innocent school-girl gossip."

"No, dear, what I am going to say is *real* gossip, and such as really will surprise you; but hush, do not speak so loud, and don't seem much interested, or else that lynx-eyed Miss Percivale will fancy something, and pry till she finds it all out; and promise me, dear, if you love me, never tell anyone what I am going to say. About Mr. Smith, the drawing-master, you would not believe what I told you last half, but here you shall have proof positive that he more than admires me. See what we have written on the leaves of my drawing-book, when poor innocent Miss Percivale and Miss Browne thought I was so industriously drawing away, and Mr. Smith correcting." And while speaking she had taken a large packet of scraps of paper from her pocket, adding, "Besides, I am going to consult you and take your advice."

In a moment Miss Percivale sprang from her concealment, and was in the arbour, had seized the hand that held the crumpled papers, and possessed herself of the whole valuable collection. She never spoke one word to the terrified young ladies, which greatly increased their alarm. What was she going to do? How came she there? Had she overheard them? What could they do? Miss Cox was paralyzed with terror. They looked and thought these questions, but 'twas long ere they whispered them to each other.

Miss Percivale's was a most judicious silence, for had she appeared to know all, or to have spoken, she must have called Miss Plattford into counsel, but she determined to sift the matter completely before deciding how to act, for she felt that poor Miss Plattford wanted both caution and discretion and did not know anything of the too just complaints of the parents; but matters appeared to the acute head teacher to be drawing towards a crisis.

A short time after this event, and before the teachers had recovered their astonishment, or Miss Percivale had even had time to glance through the papers, the bell sounded for resuming the studies, and the children were no sooner arranged in the school-room than Miss Plattford sent word that she was coming immediately to continue her examination, and lecture on the art of conversing beneficially. This, it was to be hoped, would be more successful than the last, for a *scheme* had been given for

dividing and classing the subjects of discourse. Thus it ran :—

Firstly. Give, if possible, an apt and pretty epithet to the subject on which you intend to speak ; let it be inadvertently, as it were, *e. g.*, something in the room attracts your notice.

Secondly. If the subject chosen be a flower, a painting, or book, advert to its locality, the artist, or the author.

Thirdly. Recite an anecdote or incident connected with the history of flower, painter, or author.

Fourthly. Then speak of the beneficial or injurious properties of either, their merits and defects ; do this extensively, as it shows clearness and perspicuity in the talker.

Fifthly. Quote a line of poetry, or rather give only a few words, which has more effect by puzzling the listener, and increasing his opinion of your extensive reading ; give the name of the poet and his works, if possible.

Sixthly. If you add a few apt words in French, German, or Italian, the effect is intense.

Seventhly. Seek an antithesis ; this is inimitable if you have only wit sufficient.

Eighthly. Wind up with a moral reflection ; this requires great judgment not to appear dull, for morality is heavy in hand, if not managed with vivacity.

“ Now, young ladies, I hope to find you attentive to-day after all the trouble we have taken with you. Don't let me see any standing on one leg, hanging on the other's shoulders, nor yawning. By the by, while talking of manners, which I always do very reluctantly, I must tell you, first, that I was much distressed at hearing that when your dancing-master paid his last visit that you each drew forth a pocket-handkerchief on his entry into the school-room, and began simultaneously to *moucher*, and that this was a preconcerted measure to embarrass the new master, and prevent his being heard while making his compliments, and arranging the sets. This is very, very sad ; what can I say ? I hope my forbearance will touch your naughty hearts.

“ Now then to business. I think, Miss Percivale, all the classes have learnt the questions. Oh ! Miss Percivale is not here, is she, Miss Browne ? ”

"No, ma'am, she has just quitted the room. The young ladies, I know, have learnt what was set them."

"What is conversation?" then said Miss Plattford with a happy smile, as she addressed herself to the head class.

"The art of mutual interchange of thought carried on between two parties through the medium of words."

"Very well, my dear, now the next. What should be the chief object in this mutual intercourse of mind?"

"Mutual advantage."

"How may this object be best obtained?"

"This must depend on the relative powers of the parties engaged in conversation, but one thing should be always kept in view, which is, that all such intercourse should be essentially instructive in an intellectual as well as moral point of view, and if these two objects be kept always in sight both will be attained together."

"Ma'am, may I ask something?"

"Yes, dear, what?"

"Mayn't we talk sometimes for amusement, or for fun? Selina is so very funny; that isn't wrong, is it, ma'am?"

"No, my dear, but pray don't interrupt me. I dare say you will have amusement enough by and by, if you follow me attentively now," said the governess. "What should be the basis of conversation?"

"The imparting or receiving of some valuable piece of information."

"Have we not a wide field from whence to draw a selection of subjects?"

"Yes, the whole range of history, philosophy, and science offers itself, and whatever from these vast stores is presented to the mind may be so viewed as to yield a moral lesson valuable for the guidance of conduct, the exercise of the highest faculties of the soul, and to ensure the best interests of mankind at large."

"Very well, very well, indeed, dear children, not a word has been missed. I shall reward you all: but, dear Selina, are you ill? Miss Browne, is anything the matter with Miss Maxwell, the poor child looks quite dispirited."

"No, ma'am, thank you, there's nothing the matter with me," said Selina, blushing very much, which blush was again reflected more deeply on the cheeks and forehead of Miss Cox.

"Good children, now let us proceed," said Miss Plattford.

The incidents which the zealous governess had selected from her mines of mental wealth, had been perfectly worked into the memories and lips of her pupils. Anecdotes drawn from the Four Empires of the East, the destruction of the Roman Empire, the Italian Republics, the Emancipation of the American States, down to Cinderella and Puss in Boots, yielded their precious stores to elucidate and embellish the lesson. The memories of the children were surprising: quotations from the English Speaker were poured out in a full tide of eloquence, the moral reflections being done by Miss Plattford herself. The success was amazing, the whole scene affecting, and the dear little plump head of the establishment was almost in tears of rapture and delight. How could she reward the dear children and the indefatigable teachers who had so kindly exceeded her most sanguine hopes?

A *fête* in the country was decided on, and promised to the pupils early in the next half year; but how weak are mortals to reckon on the future! for no coming half year was to dawn on Lawn Lodge as a school, nor with a Miss Plattford at its head!

We take the liberty now of following Miss Percivale to her sleeping-apartment, whither the reader may guess she had retired for the purpose of scanning over the little packet of papers of which she had so unexpectedly become possessed; and we shall take the liberty of peeping over her shoulder the while. The pencilled tracery ran thus:

First scrap—"Why do you look at me so much, Miss Cox?" "I'm not looking at you much, and if I do it's because you keep looking at me." "And can't you guess why I look at you, then? Has no one told you how very pretty you are? did you never hear of love and admiration?"

Second paper, a good deal soiled—"Don't you know you are the prettiest girl in the school. I should like to paint your likeness. I like everything that is beautiful; I can't help looking at it." In a school-hand, was written underneath, "Nonsense, I am sure I'm not pretty, and you don't like me."

Third scrap—"You seem very coy and distant, Miss,

to-day, but although I'm a drawing-master, my family is as good as yours, and I can't help being fond of you, that I can't. Do you mean to say you dislike me? I won't believe it, for you smile; so just write 'yes.'" "Yes, I do like you, rather."

Fourth paper—"My happiness depends on you; I must tell you I love you. Scorn me or not I'm a man of spirit, and I'll make you like me in time, but I know you do now: only smile, and I'll be happy." "Oh, thank you, thank you. If I was found out I should be ruined, so you see I risk everything for you."

Fifth paper—"Don't betray me, but I love you to distraction. I have plenty of money for us both; tell me you love me; say yes." "Yes—why should I say it so often? you know I like you better than anybody else."

Sixth paper—"Your last words delighted me; now I am quite happy, and I can manage to take you from here, and no one shall know a word about it till we are married. I'll have the banns called; no one for a moment will dream it is you, and my name, Smith, is so common, no one will think of me. There are thousands of Tom Smiths, and then the Monday after the third Sunday we've nothing to do but walk quietly into church, and we are done in ten minutes." "I will think about it, and give an answer next lesson." "Let me have, and burn these papers, dear Sarah." "No, I'll keep them quite safe; no one shall ever see them. I think I shall say 'yes' to your plan; I know you will be kind to me."

Poor Miss Percivale, how did she feel on reading this awful conspiracy! she returned to the school-room, having locked up the manuscripts in her work-box, determined to tell the whole to Miss Plattford as soon as she could get a private interview with her, but to say nothing to Miss Cox. On reaching the school-room she found the talking universal, and the children much excited by the deserved praise they had received from Miss Plattford. It was with a loud voice that she called out, "Silence, silence, young ladies!"

It produced no effect, she could hardly hear her own voice. She threatened to make examples of them, but the spirit of talking, which before Miss Plattford's lecture and lesson had required no stimulus, seemed to have

increased to a louder, more prolonged, and universal chattering. It was of little use to inquire what they had to say, or what they were talking about. Miss Percivale received the same answer, whether in exact accordance with truth or not, that they were "only talking scientifically, and reciting facts, and doing what their mistress had required of them." Miss Plattford was gone out; what could the under-teacher effect alone?

"Silence, young ladies! silence, I say!" screamed Miss Percivale, at the highest pitch of her voice. It produced little effect. The words were clearly heard above the tumult, for she could outcream anything, and she was becoming more angry and excited every minute.

Harriette moved gently from one pupil to another, urging and begging them to be quiet, and to attend to Miss Percivale's wishes. The head teacher endeavoured to influence those within her reach, though in a less gentle and tranquil manner. She at last caught hold of one obstreperous, refractory young lady, with the intention of shaking her into a sense of propriety, when most maliciously she slipped from the hands of the impatient teacher, and threw herself violently on the floor. To all present, it appeared, as the little vixen herself had intended it should do, that Miss Percivale had purposely struck her down. Silence was instantaneously produced through the room by this seeming violence, with the exception of the screams, sobs, and kickings of the unfortunate Miss Muffat. The door-bell rang at this moment, and shortly after the mistress of the house entered the school-room, exclaiming—

"Dear me, Miss Percivale; Miss Browne, what is this? have the goodness to explain it to me, how did this occur?"

Miss Muffat was picked up by Harriette, and went sobbing into the next room, and Miss Plattford followed her.

"Will no one inform me what the meaning is of all this unladylike proceeding? Miss Browne, what is it all about? Miss Muffat, are you, my dear, really hurt? What has happened to you? Speak."

"Miss Percivale," sobbed Miss Muffat, "Miss Percivale," another sob.

"What of her? speak out directly," urged the frightened governess.

"Miss Percivale," sob, sob, "Miss Percivale.....was angry.....about nothing. Oh! my arm!"

"What, has Miss Percivale struck you? I cannot think that."

A fresh flood of tears, and a sob intended to sound something like a yes, would have succeeded in convincing Miss Plattford, that an affirmative answer had been given to her query, had not the accused teacher then joined the group.

"No, ma'am," replied she, with a firmness of manner, which proved the strong effort she made to control her naturally violent temper. "I can satisfy you, if you will allow me to speak with you in another room."

Miss Plattford assented, and both ladies withdrew together. As soon as they had reached the drawing-room poor Miss Percivale, although trembling violently from the effects of the late excitement, and with a countenance frightfully pale, for be it remarked, all female teachers are exquisitely sensitive to any annoyance, said—

"I know, ma'am, that you have reason to think that I have struck Miss Muffat, or used her with harshness; but I assure you, on my word, that her falling down was her own act, and done intentionally to spite me. The room was in a perfect uproar from this new mode of encouraging so much talking. You can have no conception of what it is when you are not present. They respect you, and....."

"Do you imply that they do not respect you, Miss Percivale?"

"Dear! respect me! No, of course not; nobody, from the lady who *hires* us to the lowest menial in the house, ever respects a poor teacher. But I don't care much about that; nevertheless, I wish to do my duty, and if so, you must allow me, for your own sake, to speak very plainly, whether you take it in good part or not. But first, let me tell you about Miss Muffat. I took hold of her, intending to do her no harm, but to urge her to silence. I had spoken several times to no purpose, and the noise rather increased than otherwise, and I intended making an example only of one or two, by giving them

tasks to learn, or by putting the younger ones on the forms until you came home; but the moment I only touched Miss Muffat, she flung herself with violence on the floor. This, I hope, you will believe, although you have only my statement. But about this plan of talking, Miss Plattford, it will never answer; it is nothing but a wild theory, not reduceable to practice, but is making your pupils insufferably tedious and presumptuous for the rest of their days. And if you will take my advice, you will give it up at once."

"Give it up! give it up, Miss Percivale! not I, when it is succeeding too, beyond my most sanguine expectations! What could be more complete than the result this afternoon?"

"Well, ma'am, you may take my word for it, it will never answer, and moreover, it will be the ruin of your school, I do assure you," persisted the head teacher.

"I think, Miss Percivale," replied Miss Plattford, "that you are rather presuming now, and had better descend to the school-room, and try to calm your feelings a little."

"If you think, Miss Plattford, that I speak on this subject only because I am excited, you are quite mistaken, for I have thought for a long time of speaking to you about it, and I know that such chimerical schemes will never answer; but, now for myself, I think I may be displeased that you order me like a servant from your presence; I really, therefore, cannot remain with you, for my spirits will not bear it, to have such confusion and insubordination in the school-room, and such unkindness and ingratitude from you, Miss Plattford, when I am only speaking disinterestedly for your good."

"Chimerical schemes, indeed! wild vagaries, forsooth!" muttered the distressed genius; "of course I must consent to be taught by Miss Percivale. You would fetter a mind like mine with your narrow systems, and harness me like Pegasus, with a team of oxen, to plough the dull routine of ordinary scholastic systems. We had better part, Miss Percivale; we shall never get on together, for I shall not condescend to alter my plans and adapt myself to the contracted views of modern boarding-school instruction!"

We must recollect, in excuse for this outbreak of Miss Plattford, that this was a blow at her heart of hearts, to attack her pet scheme, her *chef d'œuvre* of genius, so original, and so successful as it had proved! She must therefore be pardoned, if, unlike her usual kind and easy nature, she was, on this trying occasion, very angry, and indiscreetly overlooked her own self-interest.

"Without regret," she continued, "Miss Percivale, I accept your resignation of the office you fill in my house; and perhaps it is well, for I have long felt that we are too unlike to assimilate, or to live together with any comfort."

"Thank you," said Miss Percivale, haughtily, "I think so too, but when I quit this house I will leave proofs sufficient behind me to show you I am right, and to justify my speech on this occasion. And you will learn then that if my manner was unpleasant to you, my object was only to serve you."

She then quitted the room, but returned again almost immediately, saying, in a quiet, subdued tone—"I cannot quarrel with you, Miss Plattford, for I feel at present that you need a friend; therefore patiently listen to me. There are many things going on, with respect to this house, that you ought to know, and for your sake I must not delay to tell you of them, that you may, if possible, avert the evil consequences. You told me you had five pupils who had given notice to quit at the vacation; I have been told, that six more intend to leave. I have gathered this from the conversation of the children themselves, and heard it confirmed by the parents, and to-day I discovered a plot which, if known in the town, would destroy your establishment at once. Will you, therefore, look at these papers, which I took out of Miss Cox's hands this morning, when Selina Maxwell was to have been made a party to it."

"Indeed, Miss Percivale, I cannot be so harassed; but I really thank you for trying to serve me. If eleven children leave, I dare say eleven more may come; nothing is so fluctuating as a school, and I shall, I dare say, do very well without advice. I am very much vexed at present with your unkind, and, I must say, presuming way of treating my management of my pupils, and therefore I

am in no humour to hear more. I thank you for your intentions of serving me nevertheless."

"Very well, ma'am, I came to give you my assistance at a time when I know you stand in need of it, but I had better carry these papers, and divulge the plan of this intended elopement, to the parents of the young lady."

"Elopement! Heavens, Miss Percivale, what do you mean?"

"Oh! nothing, ma'am. I have nothing more to say," so putting Miss Cox's valuable manuscripts again into her pocket, she walked quietly to the school-room, and engaged herself again in the routine of duty.

"What have I done?" thought Miss Plattford; "how foolish of me to be angry, and lose one who was willing to help me; but I know enough now to ward off any disaster from myself. I have strongly suspected of late that I am not fitted for keeping a school. It is a mere drudgery suited only to ordinary minds, and I have too much talent or genius for such a rôle. So let the plot be what it may, I will never inquire, nor allow myself to be informed of what it consisted. I have always two or three irons in the fire, for a genius like mine can never be without a resource. I will accept my cousin's invitation, and go to America. There women may shine forth as members of the intellectual world who are here only designated as the 'weaker sex,' and whose whole destiny is supposed to be fulfilled by the performance of those maternal duties of

'Suckling fools, and chronicling small beer.'

But in America woman holds her true, her exalted position; her rights are there acknowledged—and what is the result? I will go thither as soon as I am free from the toils of school-keeping, and meet and luxuriate in an intercourse with spirits congenial to my own. There I might become a second Frances Wright, and carry my oratory through the length and breadth of the United States! What if I should but succeed there in carrying out this grand idea of reducing conversation into a system for the amelioration of mankind in general!"

Having quickly, yet firmly, determined on this plan of anticipating or warding off any evil effects from the

threatening storm, Miss Plattford, who always acted, as it were, on the spur of the moment, sat down after she had discussed her solitary tea, and having taken out her writing-desk, she addressed a circular of short pithy notes to the parents of each of her pupils, simply asserting, that she intended relinquishing her school at Midsummer, which would be in the course of a few weeks.

She had money enough to pay and arrange everything comfortably, and at once sold her business at a very reduced price to another lady. At Miss Percivale's request, Miss Cox was sent home on the plea of illness, which she and her parents very gladly allowed her to assume for the purpose of saving her from an imprudent marriage and a public disgrace.

It was a disappointment to Harriette Browne to have again so soon to seek another situation, but she had a happy home where she could remain until she met with "something which might suit her," and this happened to occur in a most satisfactory manner, after waiting only a short time. We turn now to the head teacher, to whom no home offered itself as a shelter, and no hope (as she thought) rose within the horoscope of her fortunes.

Two days after the announcement of the breaking up of Miss Plattford's establishment, Miss Percivale was taken very unwell. The excitement and annoyance she had experienced, and her anxiety about procuring another situation, added to the dread she felt lest this indisposition should lead to a second serious illness, brought to a crisis, as might be expected, the anticipated ailment; she was therefore so ill, on the third day after the foregoing interview, with a feverish attack, that she was compelled to keep her bed and send for a medical man. She seemed constantly to be harassed by a vision of approaching destitution. Harriette was her constant attendant, performing every little office which her kind thoughtfulness suggested, and this with the utmost tenderness and care. The indisposition, fortunately, soon yielded to the skill of the medical attendant, and the good nursing of Harriette, and in a few days the patient was pronounced convalescent.

One afternoon, when Miss Percivale had been removed

from the bed to a sofa, and Harriette was sitting by her side at work, the former said:—

“You do so often put me in mind, particularly since you have been nursing me so kindly, of such a sweet friend I once had, who visited me in my last illness, although this lady was much older than you are. I was ill, very, very ill, and very unhappy, and she came to visit me in pure benevolence; charity, I may say, for I knew nothing of her before. I do not mind the word charity now. I am glad I am not so proud as I used to be, then. I was very wicked. I did not know at the time all she had done for me, dear, kind soul; she was so delicate lest she should wound my feelings; yet I cannot tell you half she did for me, nor how kindly she bore with my irritation, and strove to soothe it. I learnt afterwards from the woman of the house all her good, generous deeds to me, and I fear I shall never see her again to thank her for all she did for me, nor find an opportunity of expressing the deep gratitude I shall ever feel towards her. Miss Browne, I am also very sorry to think how very unkindly I have behaved to you, dear, formerly. Will you forgive me?”

“Yes, dear Miss Percivale, do not distress yourself,” replied Harriette; “pray do not think of it again, I am sure I never do so now.”

“You are a good, kind creature, and I shall soon be better if I may treat you as a friend, and tell you all I feel. I am sure you are a friend, or you could never be so kind, nor attend on me night and day in this manner, when you know I can never repay you, but with thanks.”

Harriette endeavoured to satisfy Miss Percivale that it was a pleasure to contribute to her comfort, when the patient continued,

“I think I had some excuse at the time for my conduct at Forester House. I was spoiled in temper by the unkindness of my father. From a child I never had anyone to love me. I hardly knew what kindly feelings meant: they never were awakened in me until of late. I had no hope, no joy in life; the necessity for exertion to maintain an existence, void of all enjoyment, seemed at times like madness or mere folly. Such dark and sinful thoughts have come across my mind at times; I dare hardly think

of them now. I have so loathed life that I have wished to end it, though nothing of hope should lie beyond! Yet I ought not to tell you this, and make you hate my sinfulness, when I so earnestly desire your love.

"I was placed where you first knew me, amongst a set of haughty, fashionable girls, who thought much of birth, fortune, and station. I was of low birth compared with them; I dreaded to be despised, and, therefore, like a weak creature as I was, I endeavoured by every method in my power to conciliate those who were most insolent and airified, and tried to raise myself in their estimation by every means in my power. As their instructor, I even condescended to imitate their follies and their faults. When you came, I saw that you had more sense than they, and that you despised me for my conduct, and with my temper could I do otherwise than hate you? Your generosity also towards the poor girl whom I used to treat with so much unkindness and scorn made me use both you and Mary Wilmot worse than I should otherwise have done. I tell you all my faults. I wish, if possible, for you to excuse them, though I often think of what is past, and shall never cease to condemn myself for the wicked passions in which I then indulged. I think I am changed now. You will, perhaps, forgive me, but I wish I knew that Miss Wilmot did so also! Poor girl, I long to have had an opportunity of telling her how sorry I am that I was so unkind and harsh. I wonder what has become of her now; did you ever hear of her after you left school?"

"Yes," replied Harriette, "she is living only fifteen miles from hence; should you really like to see her?"

"Yes, indeed, I should, for I think she would not dislike to meet me, if you will tell her how much I regret my past conduct towards her. She is out as a governess, I suppose, now?"

"No," replied Harriette, "her parents have unexpectedly come into a large fortune, and are living at their estate at Woodburn."

"Oh, then I will not ask to see her, it will look like what I used to be, when she knew me, anxious to play up to those only who are in affluence; I cannot see her now. If she had been poor or unhappy, like myself, I would

have done anything in my power to serve her, and atone for my past harshness. But pray do not talk to her of me, if you should chance to see her."

Harriette made no reply to this observation, and the subject changed to the question as to what would become of them both when thrown out of their present situation. On this point poor Miss Percivale showed great anxiety. She was too dispirited to hope for any good: and while Harriette endeavoured to cheer her, she exclaimed pettishly—

"No, Miss Browne, do not hold out false hopes to me, you have a kind mother, and a home to receive you when you go from hence. You are good and amiable, and every one is your friend, even she who hated you for being better than herself, for indeed I cannot now help loving you. But you do not know the bitterness of wishing to be loved while feeling that you do not possess the power of exciting a kindly feeling in any breast. I am too unamiable, my very manner seems to drive people from me; and with such an impression on my mind how can I condescend to seek or to conciliate those who will not even meet me half way, so how can I be loved? But now I could feel a strong affection for those even who will only kindly bear with my defects. Oh! you cannot tell the lonely desolateness of this wicked heart. Nothing but evil, distrustful, and unkind thoughts seem to make their home here. And it is so very difficult—you do not know how difficult it is—to cherish kind and gentle thoughts in a heart so utterly unhappy as mine: one whose whole existence has been unsunned by a single friendship or one cheering hope. Once only, for a time, I trusted myself with a dream of brighter days, when kindlier feelings were called into existence; but I woke from it only to a reality of more intense, more hopeless wretchedness. Every possible mortification attended on my disappointment. I had been deceived, and by *his* means was also rendered ridiculous in the eyes of others. I fear I never can forget it. My disappointment was nothing to compare with what I endured from mortified and wounded pride! I had a long illness after this event, when the kind friend, of whose countenance and manner you have so frequently reminded me, came to visit me. She seemed to like me, and to feel an

interest about me which no other human being ever showed towards me before."

"That lady was my mother," said Harriette, blushing as she spoke.

"What, my dear girl! your mother? oh, do not, do not say so: it will break my heart," saying which the poor invalid leaned back on the couch and sobbed violently.

For some minutes Harriette did not interrupt these tears, for Miss Percivale was not used to giving way to such weakness, and Harriette thought this weeping might tend to relieve her full heart. Presently she took her hand, saying—

"Miss Percivale, why should you be so much affected? I am sorry that I have distressed you so greatly."

"You have not really distressed me, dearest, but only think what I must feel when I hear that the two kindest friends I have ever yet met with have been the ex-pupil, whom I most harshly, most scornfully treated at school, and that dear child's mother! But your gentleness and sympathy have taught me that I have not so bad a heart as I thought I had. You have awakened me to those better feelings of which I fancied myself deficient, and which had hitherto been crushed by harshness and indifference. How much I owe you."

Harriette then invited Miss Percivale, in case she should not find a home on leaving Miss Plattford's, or in case she should not be sufficiently recovered to enter on the duties of a new situation, to spend a few weeks at Woodburn; and then, having led off the conversation to less exciting subjects, the *tête-à-tête* concluded, when Harriette and Miss Percivale found that they had advanced many steps towards a warm and lasting friendship.

A few weeks after this interview, when Miss Percivale had quite recovered from her illness, with the exception of that debility which ever lingers after a severe feverish attack, she one day received by the post a letter, the contents of which greatly surprised her.

"MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND—You will, I suppose, be a little surprised at hearing from me, as it seems an age since we last heard anything of each other. For a long time I had been trying to find out where you were gone,

and I almost began to be afraid that I should never hear anything more of you. Through a professional gentleman, who came to my son about an instrument, we heard that you were living at Miss Plattford's, at whose school he was teaching music. It came out quite accidentally, and I don't know how, and I thought it must be the same Miss Percivale, so I sent to ask him to find out if the lady he spoke of had ever lived at Forester House, which he promised to inquire about when he returned to Lawn Lodge. I was so glad, my dear, to find you out, for I was quite distressed when Alfred told me how shamefully you had been served by him and that young lady, and I also wanted to tell you that I had no knowledge whatever of what was going on at the time. My son, when he came to his senses, and I had talked to him a bit was very, very sorry for what he had done, and said that if he ever saw you again he was ready to beg your pardon on his knees. Do think of him as well as you can, for he has not really a bad heart, and scarcely seems to have been comfortably himself ever since. He is so good and kind a son that I cannot think ill of him, though I blame him very severely for this piece of conduct to you, but where a young man is dutiful and attached to his old mother, I think it shows that more than half his heart is good—at least *I* must think so. But, however, I am going off about him instead of telling you my reason for writing. I am still living where I was when you visited me, and I thought, my dear, that if you were coming to London for the holidays that I should like very much to have you here for a few weeks with me. I think we might be very comfortable, for I was vastly pleased with the little I saw of you, and I want to make some amends to you for my son's illconduct, and I promise you that he shall not come in your way, if it should be at all unpleasant to you, nor without your consenting to see him. He lives at his own place of business, and will not be at Brompton unless I invite him, so do not be uneasy on his account, but write soon and tell me that you will come, and when I may expect you. I remain, my dear Miss Percivale,

“Your sincere friend,

“SARAH SUTTON.”

"Certainly," thought poor Miss Percivale, "the F seem to be smiling on me, and the change seems to c from various quarters all at once. I can now count th real friends, not forgetting poor Gibbins and his wife."

The fact was that the haughty spirit which had spr forth from its natural hotbed of harshness and injus was now humbled and laid low by sympathy and kindn and the teacher, therefore, felt doubly grateful for consideration she now met with. She was not unwilli if Mr. Sutton should desire it, to forgive and forget as as might be, all that had passed; but it would be w some degree of reluctance that she could consent to see him again. Yet the good-natured old lady's invitati would be so very agreeable as well as valuable to her i financial point of view, from having no home to go to leaving Lawn Lodge, and also the neighbourhood of to would offer so good an opportunity for finding a comf able situation for herself, that Miss Percivale decided availing herself of Mrs. Sutton's kind proposal. With inclinations, therefore, bent towards reconciliation, a determined in her own mind to accept the invitati she went to consult her friend Harriette, with a cour nance so lighted up with pleasure and sensibility that looked quite another creature.

After a short conversation, in which they both agr that she could not do better than go, Miss Percivale down and answered the old lady's letter. She express in warm terms, her sense of the obligation confer on her by Mrs. Sutton's having so long remembe her, as well as for the kindness which prompted the invi tion to visit her, which she gladly accepted, and fixed the day when she should leave her present situation, m tioning the hour also at which she should hope to be down in Knightsbridge. She also added, that as I Alfred was the son of her kind friend, to whose hospital she would so soon be indebted, it would be impossible her to retain any feelings of animosity towards him; 1 could she wish him to abstain from visiting at his mothe house on her account. She desired her compliments Mr. Sutton, and was quite willing to forget all the pa and concluded her letter with a feeling of satisfaction th she had done right, although she greatly dreaded 1

prospect of meeting one so faithless, and who had used her so cruelly.

The school had broken up, and a painful scene of parting had taken place between Miss Plattford and her teachers, with whom she had been on the most friendly terms; and there had been great weeping, together with a handsome show of leave-taking presents, spread out on the drawing-room table, as indications of the munificent spirit and grateful affection with which all the pupils had regarded their kind-hearted little governess. In fact, Miss Plattford had been quite overcome at this scene of parting, and before the shedding of tears and the embracing were half over, she was obliged to give in, and run away to the privacy of her own apartment, there to cry out her joyful agitation.

Miss Plattford's plan was now to take only a few pupils at a higher premium, who should be entirely parlour-borders, and constantly under her own eye, for with this surveillance, she fondly hoped, that it would be impossible for them to get into any mischief, and that she should then be able to judge of their characters individually, and guide and direct them in the right path, with even more than maternal care and solicitude.

Harriette was once more at home, and enjoying her mother's company, together with that of her kind friends the Wilmots; and after having given herself up to the enjoyment of idleness, for a few weeks, she caused inquiries to be again made for the situation of governess for herself; and feeling wearied with the annoyances which she had experienced at Miss Plattford's, from being in a school, she was anxious to try whether the duties of a governess in a private family would not be more agreeable, and congenial to her tastes.

Until our little heroine succeeds in obtaining some fresh employment for her talents, we will follow Miss Percivale to Brompton.

She was soon comfortably domesticated in Mrs. Sutton's house. Alfred, encouraged by the amiable tone of her letter, and the permission granted for his being admitted to his mother's house, had made a point of being in waiting where the coach set the visitor down, attended also by Mrs. Sutton, and a hackney chariot. The meet-

ing was a little embarrassing, but the awkwardness was soon removed by the anxiety which Mrs. Sutton and her visitor displayed about fitting the sundry trunks and band-boxes into the vehicle, in such a manner as to leave sufficient space for seating themselves.

After a great deal of putting in and taking out again, without being able to attain the desired object, it at length became a question, whether Mr. Alfred or a huge portmanteau should be hoisted on the coach-box; and on Miss Percivale saying, rather shyly, "Of course, put the portmanteau there," he smiled his gratitude so amiably, and insinuated his robust person into the carriage so dexterously, took up so very little room, and applied himself to being so very obliging and accommodating, that it was impossible for Miss Percivale to be otherwise than kind and patronizing; and the rickety old vehicle had not swayed and jolted over the pavement many yards, before they were all three talking and laughing as merrily as if Miss Boulton had never existed. The little old lady was just as cheerful as formerly, and just as good-natured and chatty; and the visit seemed to promise everything Miss Percivale could wish, and was especially enjoyable after the heartless wear and tear of a half-year's residence in a school.

Mr. Sutton came to escort his mother and her friend to some place of amusement, whenever he found time to leave his place of business, and each time appeared in a more beautiful waistcoat. Many other symptoms of the growing of the tender passion were betrayed in his increased anxiety as regarded his toilet. Suspicion was at length excited in the breast of Miss Percivale, but she determined not to be again his dupe. Tickets for the theatre, and tickets for concerts, were frequently sent to Mrs. Sutton by her son, which would admit three persons, and at the hour appointed, he was sure to be in attendance. At the end of three weeks, however, matters wore a different and more serious aspect. Mr. Sutton came more frequently, but stayed a shorter time; his dress was neglected, he spoke very little, and seemed much out of spirits, and was heard to exhale one or two most elaborate sighs at intervals of about every ten minutes. Miss Percivale could not fail of hearing them,

but she had had enough of "foolish fancies," and the idea of any sentiment really being felt towards her now, was subdued as soon as it arose.

Mr. Sutton became shabbier and shabbier, and his hair each day became longer and lanker, and his puffings more profound and frequent, still, though his attentions were offered most humbly and most submissively, yet he received not one particle of encouragement. At length, one morning he came to Brompton very early, and breakfasted with the ladies. After this meal, during which Alfred had appeared rather absent, his mother left the room for the purpose of ordering the dinner, and looking into her larder, as also to take out anything that might be wanted from the store-closet. Mr. Sutton had appeared so odd in his manner during that morning, and something seemed to be impending of so awful a nature, that Miss Percivale hardly liked to remain to a *tête-à-tête* with him, although she had done so twenty times before without feeling any awkwardness at all on the occasion. She did not like remaining alone, yet still less did she like to go away, for it would appear so very foolish. She therefore seated herself at a small table with her workbox, and sedulously engaged herself in the intricacies of a piece of elegant embroidery.

Mr. Sutton took up the newspaper, and soon after laid it down again; he then took up a book, but could not have read one page before that also followed the fate of the newspaper. He then rose and walked to the window; his coat was thrown back, and the two first fingers of both hands were thrust perpendicularly into the pockets of his waistcoat. His whole personal appearance betokened that of a dejected lover, while his countenance expressed something between the feeling of a poet, a maniac, or a school-boy on the point of blubbing at some difficult task which has been imposed upon him, producing altogether that complicated expression of feeling which bespeaks the suitor not quite confident of his chance of success.

After gazing for a few minutes vacantly into the garden, he half turned towards Miss Percivale, yet without looking at her, and said, in a drawling melancholy tone,

"I suppose it is of no use to hope that you will ever cease to think ill of me, Miss Percivale?"

"Why, sir?" replied the lady, engaging herself more devotedly to a piece of her satin stitch, and leaning her head forward, so as effectually to shade her face, with her luxuriant dark curls.

"Because," resumed Mr. Sutton, "I have behaved so very ill to you, that you can never believe anything I say."

"Sir, pray do not say anything more about that disagreeable business; I told you, that I forgave you, and I will forgive you a little more, if that will satisfy you."

"Oh! thank you, thank you," replied Mr. Sutton, in the same sulky, disconsolate tone; "you must let me say something more. I am miserable, I am wretched, and....."

"Surely, sir," said Miss Percivale, interrupting him, hastily, "that can be no affair of mine, and I shall feel obliged, nay, I beg that you will change the subject."

"I cannot change the subject—you must hear me—it does concern you, and I can think of nothing else. Do listen to me, there's a d.....d-e-a-r."

"Sir," continued Miss Percivale, beginning to feel a little embarrassed, "you do not talk the high-flown nonsense which I once listened to, yet I have no wish to be made ridiculous by you again, and I *must* beg that you say no more, or you will compel me to leave your mother's hospitable roof."

She was rising to quit the room, when Mr. Sutton placed his vigorous person near the door, exclaiming, "Oh! do not let me drive you away! I will promise to speak no more on the subject. Shall I read to you some of the news of the day?"

"Why, if you will not let me leave the room, and like to read aloud, I suppose that I cannot help hearing," said she with a smile.

This was said so good-humouredly, that they accordingly resealed themselves, and the lady continued her needlework, and Mr. Sutton commenced reading. Having concluded two soul-stirring murders, one railroad accident, and the mortality caused by an explosion in a coal-mine, Mr. Sutton paused, as if to recover breath. He gazed out of the window with a wild, distracted air, started from his reverie, looked towards Miss Percivale, who also started a little, then drawing his chair nearer the table at which she

was seated, he resumed the reading with redoubled vigour. "Awful Circumstance—Loss of a Wife."

"It must be a terrible thing, to be sure," said Mr. Sutton, looking off the paper with an indescribable expression of countenance at the lady opposite to him, "but it's a deal more awful, I fancy, to get a wife! Don't you think so, ma'am?" said the lover, putting aside the paper, and applying himself diligently in taking the pins out of Miss Percivale's cushion, and sticking them firmly into the balls of cotton.

"How should I know?" she replied. "You make me laugh, you do, you tiresome creature. What are you doing with my workbox?"

"Thank you, oh! thank you for smiling; I think you will listen to me now. I promise that I will talk no nonsense, nothing but what I *really* mean, and believe me, that now I have seen more of you, I respect you too much to trifle. I have a comfortable house and a prosperous business, and if you could make up your mind to like me, I think we might both be very happy together. Now do try to think well of me. I will promise to be a good husband; and if you will not accept this offer of myself, I shall be miserable."

"Well, Mr. Sutton, I cannot be angry with you now, and I will promise to see what can be done in the way of 'thinking well' of you. But suppose, when I have worked myself up to feel a grateful return of interest about you, you should then turn out a true man, be my fawning, abject slave as a suitor, and when you have gained my love, despise and undervalue it, and turn from me?"

"You still think so basely of me?"

"No, I do not believe you to be worse than your sex generally," said she with some bitterness. "I am borne out in this belief by wiser and more experienced heads than mine, and I believe there exist numbers of men who think and talk largely about 'honour,' who would loathe themselves could they see traced out in black and white the insidious baseness which actuates their conduct and pervades their characters in their intercourse with woman."

"You are indeed very severe," replied Mr. Sutton.

"No, I merely state my own convictions, which certainly have some foundation in truth. I do not think you

can help it, it is only a part of your instinctive character, a remnant of early barbarism. You are fond of pursuit, of conquest; you hate to be baffled in the attainment of any object you set your mind on; and when you have once gratified this wish by making the lady love you, the object is gained, the interest and excitement are gone, and you leave to the pity and ridicule of society the poor creature in the capture of whose heart only a few days before all your earthly happiness seemed to be involved."

"Oh! do not talk so shockingly!—you think very ill of us."

"Not worse than you deserve, think you?"

"Perhaps not—I cannot say. But will you to the point, and tell me whether you will try to esteem me as a little more worthy than when I first became acquainted with you? I assure you I am not the fop I then was, and I will, if you ever put it in my power, strive all I can to make you happy."

At this juncture Mrs. Sutton popped her little head inside the door, and was just popping it back again, when her son called to her—

"My dear mother, come in, I want to speak with you. I have been talking to Miss Percivale on the subject which I mentioned to you last night, and which has been nearest my heart every hour during the day, and she gives me so little hope, so little encouragement, that I want you to plead for me."

"That I will," said the little old lady, "and will do my best; but I question whether she would not rather listen to you than to me, in spite of her throwing cold water on you. That used to be a trick with us all, in my day; it was so amusing to hear you men vowing all sorts of things that you never felt or meant to perform; but I will do my best."

"You are every bit as mischievous as Miss Percivale. I can hardly trust my cause in your hands, either;" saying which, yet looking brimfull of hope, Mr. Sutton quitted the room.

"You don't really reject him, my dear? he has been so contrite for the past, and has learnt to love you; so do be kind, and favour his suit."

"La, ma'am; but how can I trust him?"

"Oh! he is really attached to you, my dear, so for my sake do make him happy, and I am sure he will be as good to you as he has been to me. A good son always makes a good husband, if he's *let* to, and it is no use, dear, standing 'shilly-shallying' in these matters. It's impossible for you, I think, not to like him; so say 'yes' at once."

"Yes!" said Miss Percivale. At this instant Mr. Alfred appeared, echoed the 'yes' in joyful tones, and the embarrassed happy young lady suffered the kind mother to place her hand in that of her son's, while she added—

"God bless you, my children! may you be happy together! I am fortunate in my future daughter," and she kissed first one, and then the other; and the kissing went round once or twice, mixed with merriment and laughter, and the thing was done! The ring was put on three weeks after that happy day, and Mrs. Alfred Sutton went to reside at the Instrument Repository in — Square, London. She afterwards wrote of her good fortune and happiness to Harriette Browne, who was rejoiced to hear of her having a home, and 'the best of friends.' And at a future period a beautiful pianoforte was among the wedding gifts offered to her friend Harriette.

CONCLUSION.

Some years had now passed away since Harriette had heard any tidings of the Vincents, excepting occasionally some mention of George, in the letters from Frederick Wilmot to his family. Harriette had one day gone as far as the ruins with two of the young Wilmots, who wished to go and gather sea-weeds, or collect some fossils from the beach; and, in a rather desponding mood, Harriette had taken the direction towards the old castle alone, telling the children that she should be within hearing of them if they called to her. The poor girl's prospects were far from bright—in fact, she had no prospects at all! She had indeed advertised for a situation as governess in a private family, but had failed to hear of anything likely to suit her. Indeed, a slight addition to Mrs. Browne's income, in the form of a legacy, had enabled Harriette to remain at home for two years; and with great kindness and delicacy, Mrs. Wilmot had afterwards asked her to stay and help her daughter Mary in educating her younger sisters, and had made her a liberal compensation for this use of her time, saying that "Miss Browne really was conferring a favour on herself and the Major, for that he had a particular dislike to receiving a stranger into his domestic circle. It interfered with the freedom and happiness of his intercourse with his family to take a governess into his house, but that Harriette was now become like a daughter to them both, and it would be a comfort to herself, as well as her mother, that they could now be always together, excepting for a few hours of each day."

And this Harriette had readily complied with; but still she felt depressed at times, and so it was on this occasion; her thoughts were sad, for this could not last—the girls would

soon require no further instruction, and the addition to her mother's income was but slight. She thought of George, and many bright visions chased each other through her imagination as she continued her pensive walk towards the old castle, and then they vanished again, to leave her still more desolate than before. She felt convinced that he was for ever lost to her!—then what use to think of what might have been! But though determined to banish all thoughts of George, his image nevertheless continued to haunt her, until wearied with her walk, and the continued struggle with her feelings, which she had in vain tried to maintain, she turned into a lonely part of the ruins, whose ancient chambers were now carpetted with grass. Here having seated herself, with her face turned towards the old castle, and looking carefully round to see that no one was near to witness her actions, she drew forth the golden locket from its hiding-place, and, also, a water-colour of her own drawing, which presented a good likeness, executed from memory, of her first, her only love. She gazed earnestly at both these treasures—do not call her weak and romantic—she raised them to her lips, and while tears fell fast, she continued to gaze at them through the misty dew-drops which hung upon the long eyelashes.

“Ah! it is a hopeless attachment,” she thought; “but still it is sweet to think that I *have once* been loved by such an one as George, and may be even still; and it relieves my aching heart to weep. God bless him! and may he be far more happy than I can ever hope to be!” These words found vent in sounds; once more she impressed a kiss upon the locket and portrait, when in a moment she fancied some one's shadow passed near her. She raised her eyes, and found that it was George!

It was the happy lover himself who had been the glad witness of the tenderness bestowed upon his representatives. All explanations were now rendered unnecessary on his part, and so likewise was any acting or reserve on that of the young lady herself. He had found his own true Harriette once again, and found her all his *own* in heart and soul. What could he wish for more?

To describe the scene which followed, would require a more romantic and sentimental pen than is wielded by the writer of these pages, to whom such things, as life advances,

are little more than dreams. It will be sufficient perhaps to state, that a perfect understanding again existed between these two young hearts, which had long been struggling with doubt and anxiety; and after half an hour's very satisfactory intercourse, they had resumed their former quiet and almost fraternal manner, with something more of tenderness, perhaps, than is found in that near relationship, but with all the firm confidence of attachment which usually exists between a brother and sister.

The young Wilmots soon joined the happy pair, and delighted to hear that Frederick also had arrived during their absence, the whole party returned homeward together. Attending Harriette to the garden-wicket, which led to her mother's cottage, George Vincent took his leave, saying that he would go and arrange his dress, after his long journey; and would soon return to call on Mrs. Browne. In the meanwhile he handed over a note, which Harriette was to give to her mother, as an explanation of the object of his present visit, when he hoped that he should receive a welcome. He also gave her a letter from his sister Cecile, addressed to herself, which would occupy her until he came back; and then he hastened forward with the children towards Duncombe, where he was an invited guest for as long a time as he should find it agreeable.

George's, or as we may now call him, Captain Vincent's, letter to Mrs. Browne, was handed by Harriette to her mother, as soon as she entered the cottage; but ere the seal was broken, Harriette had thrown her arms round her much-loved parent, and on her neck had revealed the secret of her heart, which had only until now been concealed from motives of consideration to her mother's feelings. Now that she was happy, and her hopes more than realized, she could weep out the full tide of joy, which oppressed her young and generous heart. Then George's letter was read, which said all that was necessary to win a parent's favour to his suit, and after the matter had been satisfactorily discussed by the happy mother and daughter, and long ere Harriette had reached the end of Cecile's voluminous epistle, Captain Vincent was announced.

While he is having a little private conversation with

"Mrs. Browne," in which among other subjects, he states, that he does not intend going to sea again; and that his income is now increased to fourteen hundred a year, we shall follow Harriette to her room, where she amuses herself by reading her dear friend's letter.

"MY DEAREST HARRIETTE—It would be impossible to tell you all that I have suffered in various ways since I last parted from you. The history of nearly six years will take long to tell, and oh! what has not occurred to distress me during that time! but I hope that I am going to be more happy now; I can hardly bear to speak of mamma; I am no longer residing with her, and my good George has returned to England, chiefly for the purpose of giving me a home; at least, he says so! Do not be unkind to him, he has been very miserable on your account. But now your hitherto unaccountable conduct towards him has been fully explained, and I hope you will learn to like him, as much as he loves you. Before you quitted T— Street, George had enclosed a note to you in a letter he wrote to me, in which he made a declaration of the affection he felt for you; but my mother accidentally possessed herself of this manuscript, read it, was 'in a way,' and threw it in the fire, commanding me, as I 'feared her displeasure,' never to tell you of its arrival or contents; never to speak to George of you or your loss of property.

"Accidentally he met you at Duncombe, and was very happy in the evident pleasure his visit gave you, and the happiness he himself experienced from finding you still unchanged; therefore, he very naturally supposed that you acknowledged his claims, and forgave the freedom of his writing to you. On his return he talked to mamma of you; she was much annoyed at his having met you at a friend's house, and quite angry at perceiving his evident and faithful attachment to you. She therefore wrote to Lord B—, a friend of my father's, who had been appointed to the command of the ship George had returned in, and begged to have him reappointed to the same vessel; and to George, using the plea of the 'immense advantages to be gained from a connexion with his lordship,' sent him out again immediately. My poor brother was very un-

happy at having to leave his home and England again, after so short a stay, but it could not be avoided, so that he determined to see you again before he sailed, and accordingly stopped one night only with his friend Wilmot, on his way to Plymouth.

"I seldom heard from George, and no mention of you was made to me for years. After leaving school, mamma took me to Brussels, and during the time we were there she became acquainted with Sir Richard Brendon, a baronet of large fortune. My mother's weakness being a love of rank and fortune, she was bent on securing the baronet for a son-in-law, and between her and Sir Richard I was nearly worried to death. The idea of marrying me to this dreadful old man! I am sure he was quite fifty years old, and dreadfully ugly. Mamma used to take me into all companies where he was likely to be; and between them I could seldom contrive to speak with anyone else. I gave up dancing entirely because I would not consent to waltz with Sir Richard five or six times during each evening we met, and therefore I determined to take no part in the amusements. You know I am pretty obstinate, but if I had not been so in this case I should have been compelled to marry this old horror, and I hated him, positively hated him; so that as his wife I should only have broken my heart had I let them have their own way. Mamma, for some time, scolded me constantly, but I never would do what I knew to be wrong. Well, at length I had a respite, but still he was always in our company, yet happily took no more notice of me, and having given up tormenting me, they even allowed me occasionally to stay at home when I wished it. At length a large party were invited to a *déjeûne* at our house, and to my astonishment, it was to be present at the marriage of my mother with Sir Richard Brendon, which ceremony was performed in our drawing-room; so he is now my papa instead of my husband!

"But I will not live with them, and therefore I wrote to George to tell him this dreadful news, and ask him to give me a home, with which he has kindly complied. I knew that if mamma married, all my father's property would come to him, with the exception only of a small jointure. I explained to him how mamma had burnt his

letter to you, and that your loss of property was the cause of her cutting you, and this fully explained to him the motives of your conduct, when he took his last farewell. I know, of course, the object of his visit to you now, and as I love you and my dear brother dearly, what can be more delightful to me than to see you both happy, and if anyone is worthy of my kind, good friend, it is my dear, dear brother. You know he loves you, and his affection has stood the test of years of discouragement. Make him happy, dearest, if you can. He has not yet seen Sir Richard and Lady Brendon, as they are prosecuting a tour in Italy. I was placed with a friend at Antwerp, from whence George has fetched me, and brought me to London. I hope soon to see you. Heaven prosper my dear brother, and believe me, dear Harriette,

“Your affectionately attached schoolfellow,

“CECILE.”

A few busy, interesting weeks flew rapidly away, and at last the wedding day arrived. Harriette and Cecile and two younger Miss Wilmots were the bridesmaids, but so common an occurrence as a bridal shall not detain us. One other match was effected between Frederick Wilmot and Cecile Vincent, which arose from the very pretty and interesting bridesmaid being so tender and sentimental about the eyes, as she parted from her brother, that the young officer quite lost his heart, and having detected the thief, consulted his friend George on his return about it, who finding that his sister was not willing to give it up, persuaded her to give her own in exchange, and a few months afterwards she added her little white hand into the bargain.

It is impossible to marry all the amiable and agreeable young ladies in the world, and it is with regret we are compelled, therefore, to state that Mary Wilmot remained single.

And here we must take leave of the whole party, and, dear reader, if ever you have patience to get to the end of this prosy tale, accept the best thanks of the author for your toleration of her poor little history.

THE END.

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